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A PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY FOR PARENTAL GRIEF AND LOSS

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A PRACTICAL CHRISTIAN MINISTRY FOR
PARENTAL GRIEF AND LOSS

A PROJECT DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE SCHOOL OF DIVINITY
IN THE BARNETT COLLEGE OF MINISTRY AND THEOLOGY
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DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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DONNA GILLIAN BAILEY

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Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	x
ABSTRACT.....	xi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	3
<i>Statement of the Problem</i>	3
<i>Relationship to Ministry</i>	7
<i>Statement of Limitations</i>	10
<i>Contextual Scope</i>	11
<i>Terminology Defined</i>	12
Suffering	13
Pain	14
Crisis	15
Trauma	16
Loss	16
Mourning	17
Lament	17
Hope.....	19
Comfort.....	20
<i>Intended Research</i>	21
<i>Project Goals and Objectives</i>	22
CHAPTER TWO: THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE	24
<i>Historical</i>	25

<i>Parental Grief and Suffering in Contemporary Literature</i>	29
Death	30
Grief	31
The Stigma of Grief	34
Processing Grief	36
Emotional "Stages" of Grief	43
<i>Death of a Child</i>	62
<i>Hope in Contemporary Literature</i>	70
Coping with Grief	73
<i>A New Normal for the Grieving</i>	77
<i>Religion and Healing</i>	78
<i>Conclusion</i>	81
CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL DIMENSIONS	83
<i>Introduction</i>	83
<i>Adam and Eve: Disobedience Resulting in Suffering and the Promise of Redemption</i>	89
<i>Hagar: Finding Hope in Suffering</i>	92
<i>Joseph: God's Favor During Human Suffering</i>	94
<i>Job: Remain Faithful while Suffering</i>	95
<i>Hannah: Finding Peace in Suffering</i>	100
<i>Rizpah: Finding God Through Laments</i>	101
<i>Habakkuk: God's Sovereignty in Suffering</i>	101

<i>Jesus, The Suffering Servant</i>	104
<i>Jesus' Suffering</i>	109
<i>Paul: Pressing on despite his Suffering</i>	113
<i>Summary</i>	117
CHAPTER FOUR.....	118
<i>Introduction</i>	118
<i>Theology of Suffering and Grief</i>	118
The origin of suffering.....	118
<i>God Understands Human Suffering and Grief</i>	121
<i>Suffering Brings Growth</i>	126
<i>Theology of Hope and Comfort</i>	129
<i>Summary</i>	137
CHAPTER FIVE: PROJECT APPLICATION	139
<i>Synthesis of the Research into Practical Ministry</i>	139
The grieving family.....	141
Understanding the unseen impacts of grief.....	144
The Circle of Love, a long-term support circle.....	146
Creating and hosting support groups.	147
Creating Effective Ministry Teams.....	148
Self-Care	149
<i>Anticipated Outcomes</i>	151

Goal One	152
Goal Two	154
Goal Four	159
<i>Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project</i>	162
<i>The Project's Effectiveness</i>	163
CHAPTER SIX: PROJECT CONCLUSION	165
<i>Lessons Learned</i>	167
<i>Limitations</i>	173
<i>Recommendations</i>	174
<i>Future Studies</i>	175
<i>Future Considerations</i>	176
<i>Impact on Life and Ministry</i>	177
BIBLIOGRAPHY	179
APPENDIXES	204
<i>Appendix A</i>	204
<i>Appendix B</i>	218
<i>Appendix C</i>	232
<i>Appendix D</i>	235
<i>Appendix E</i>	246
<i>Appendix G</i>	256

In Loving Memory of

Joshua Ian Corriveau

1990-2005

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ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of a child's death, the researcher's personal experience revealed a gap between the need for holistic spiritually based support and the availability of such resources from the local church. People, including the local church, maybe unaware of such a gap until support is required. When a congregant experiences a child's death, their spiritual support system may not be prepared to offer the necessary support and guidance. The church's insufficient preparation to minister to grieving people became the "elephant in the room" for the researcher and needed to be discussed.

This research developed and applied a standardized grief theology of parental grief, which helps to guide grieving parents to seek God for comfort and hope as they struggle to accept their child's death. In light of the limited resources available, the question needs to be asked if the amount of pastoral care training for ministers is sufficient for what they will face in the daily duties as a pastor. Without a standard in grief care, American churches may experience a chasm between what they perceive to be the wants and needs of bereaved parents versus the expectations of parents who are grieving their child's death. The ministries and counseling offered through those churches may not be effectively meeting the needs of grieving parents. As pastors study grief theology, they may receive personal healing in conjunction with being increasingly involved with the conversations revolving around grief. The congregations that enter each church are not immune to experiencing grief or PTSD.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Every day someone, somewhere, is affected by loss and suffering. Many of these people attempt to ignore or downplay their emotions because those they interact with regularly may not know how to help. Hurting people tend to question God and their spiritual beliefs during crisis situations. One of the most frequently asked questions during a crisis is "Why?" Many people are left wondering why the experience of loss or suffering happened to the individual or a family member. Another frequently asked question is, "How can a loving God allow this tragedy to happen?" Many times, this question will leave the person angry with God. Being mad at God is a typical reaction. However, remaining angry with God can create separation between that person and God. A person in crisis will either draw closer to God or turn away from Him; people do not often remain spiritually neutral.

Statement of the Problem

Individuals and family units can grow stronger when they are effectively and compassionately supported through their crises on a long-term basis. When people need help to cope with a crisis and do not know where to turn for help, they often approach the local church, expecting them to assist them long-term but often receiving quick or short-term solutions.¹ The local church and the surrounding community can be a great source of

1. John Walter Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry to People in Crisis" (master's thesis, Claremont School of Theology, 1970), 92. Accessed Oct 31, 2016. <https://search-proquest-com.seu.idm.oclc.org/docview/302451734/F8D61C042B5E4E22PQ/3?accountid=43912>

comfort and help to those who need assistance navigating the path of their suffering. The lives and marriages of traumatized individuals could depend on the positive, encouraging spiritual actions of their pastor and congregation. Churches that do not offer counseling or church counselors feel unprepared to minister appropriately and effectively to the depth of this grief and tend to refer people to local counseling centers. When the referral takes the sufferer to secular agencies, the adverse effects on people in crisis are often prolonged and exacerbated because of the lack of emphasis on the individual or family's spiritual needs.² When someone is experiencing a spiritual or faith crisis, they may seek out a pastor or church member to substantiate or validate their emotions and questions. While it is natural for people to question their faith and God when a death occurs, untimely or traumatic deaths may create more doubts and unbelief.

Churches that offer counseling are often unprepared for the depth of the tragedy experienced by grieving parents. Although the suffering that accompanies bereavement can be reduced through collaboration between church leaders, laity, and grieving parents, lack of preparedness or pastoral experience with grief could cause the grieving individuals to receive ineffective ministry and prolong suffering unnecessarily.

The unpreparedness of the church could be the result of multiple factors, including an insufficient number of staff and volunteers, limited time, limited finances, or limited knowledge to meet these needs. At this juncture, the reasons do not matter. What does matter is bridging the gap between the needs of people in crisis and the actions of the local church toward them.

2. Fred Sklar and Kathleen D. Huneke, "Bereavement, Ministerial Attitudes, and the Future of Church-Sponsored Bereavement Support Groups," *Omega* 18, no. 2 (1987): 91–92.

Thomas Oden summarized the dilemma and solution as follows:

The pastoral tradition has repeatedly faced the most harsh and undeniable realities of suffering and has been required to respond to them in deed and word . . . The season of the reasonable argument is not in the midst of acute suffering, but rather in due preparation for it. Pastoral consolations cannot substitute for concrete acts of caring service to sufferers. The time to reflect deeply upon the theological argument concerning God's justice amid suffering is not after, but before [suffering] has overtaken one . . . The person who is well-grounded in reflection about the providence and goodness of God is more likely to be able to bear whatever comes.³

As Oden indicated, it is better to develop a healthy and biblical theology of grief and comfort proactively rather than reactively. There are geographical areas in the continental United States that experience certain weather patterns during specific seasons of the year. In each of these regions, it is typical to have a supply of rations, and other necessities should adverse weather conditions force inhabitants to remain in seclusion for a period of time. For example, from April to November, the country's southeastern portion may, and often does, experience hurricanes. During April, residents in those states are cautioned to prepare a "hurricane bucket" containing important paperwork, food rations, and other items for comfort, light, and energy. In the northern states, snow conditions can force residents into seclusion for a day or up to two weeks, depending on how remotely they are located. Those residents are cautioned to be prepared with food rations, snow safety equipment, and non-electrical heat sources. The perception of preparedness is "better to be safe than sorry."

In Scripture, Noah is a great example of preparedness. In a geographical region that had not previously experienced rainfall, the concept of a flood was unimaginable.

3. Thomas C. Oden, *Crisis Ministries: Classical Pastoral Care* (New York: Crossroads, 1986), 57.

Noah followed God's instructions and prepared a floating vessel as a refuge to anyone who heeded the warnings of inclement weather on the horizon. Joseph was another example of preparing in advance of the need. When God told Pharaoh there was going to be a drought; Joseph was placed in charge of preparing storage facilities for the extra harvest during the years of plenty and overseeing the distribution of the food during the years of drought (Gen 40-41).

In the same way that people need to be prepared for the weather, the church needs to be prepared to minister to grieving individuals. Believers were not promised an absence of grief and suffering but were guaranteed that God would never leave them in the middle of the pain. Without a healthy and clear biblical theology of grief and comfort, pastors, churches, and believers can be like Job's friends who responded to Job's needs with inaccurate theology and created a new level of suffering for Job in the midst of his bereavement (Job 42:7-9).

Professional and lay ministers who wish to provide a compassionate and healing atmosphere may need guidelines to enable them to address some of the spiritual and emotional concerns of grieving parents within their congregations. Once armed with a guideline for ministry, a pastor or leader may not utilize it themselves in their ministry but could pass it on to the next generation leader who will build a great ministry from the solid foundation created before them.

Once the need is recognized, ministers need to be prepared in the event are asked to minister to someone who has experienced the death of a loved one. The question arises of how to prepare for ministry to grieving individuals.

Relationship to Ministry

In 2012, Sandy Hook Elementary School was the location of a senseless massacre in which twenty-six individuals, including children, were killed.⁴ On November 5, 2017, a lone gunman entered First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, and proceeded to shoot forty-six people.⁵ Twenty-six people, including the pastor's fourteen-year-old daughter and nine members of a single family, died in this tragedy. In the aftermath, the congregation drew strength from God and each other to endure. As of the time of the writing of this dissertation, an additional 187 individuals have been killed in educational institutions.⁶ These tragedies have garnered national and international attention. Often the media places much spotlight on the perpetrators in order to help its audience make sense of the tragedy. However, focusing on a murderer may leave the families of the victims feeling their loved one had no value within the community and cause further victimization of the deceased and their family.

When a spouse dies, the surviving spouse is called a widow or widower. When a child's parents die, the child is called an orphan. When a child dies, no descriptive name is given to a bereaved parent. No words can aptly describe bereaved parents. These grieving parents are now part of a unique group that they neither anticipated nor wanted to become members of.

4. "Sandy Hook School Shooting - HISTORY," This Day in History, History.com, December 14, 2012, <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/gunman-kills-students-and-adults-at-newtown-connecticut-elementary-school>.

5. Danielle Silva et al., "Texas Church Shooting: More Than Two Dozen Parishioners Killed," NBC News, November 5, 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/texas-church-shooting/several-casualties-reported-texas-church-shooting-n817751>.

6. David Riedman, "Number of Killed (Includes Shooter) by Year," K-12 School Shooting Database, Center for Homeland Defense and Security, February 26, 2019, <https://www.chds.us/ssdb/charts-graphs/>.

In 1987, Patricia Benner led a series of seminars based on providing care and assistance to the community. During that seminar, Benner said that providing a caring ministry to others in need is a profoundly sacred and hopeful Christian practice.⁷ The biblical injunction to love one another, give food to the hungry, and water to the thirsty, provides the basis for caring practices. The church is called to restore the appreciation and value of caring practices. Bereaved individuals feel cared for when treated as members and participants in a community of care and responsibility and feel at risk when they are treated as mere members.⁸

Support groups that are specifically geared to parents of deceased children are few and far between. Parents of Murdered Children (POMC) is one of the few organizations that specifically target grieving parents.⁹ POMC's primary goal is to be a resource for bereaved parents who are dealing with court proceedings following the arrest of their child's murderer. POMC also helps bereaved families who advocate against entertainment that promotes murder and provides companionship for parents as they observe the court proceedings. Although POMC was founded on Christian principles, religious and faith-based conversations are not permitted during group activities.

Another national group that provides support for grieving individuals is called Stephen Ministries (SM).¹⁰ This faith-based group began in the Lutheran denomination and primarily provided an intentional friend for the first year of bereavement. SM has a

7. Patricia Benner, "Conserving and Preserving Caring Practices," *Laity Exchange* 36 (June 1988): 11–13.

8. Benner, "Conserving and Preserving Caring Practices," 11.

9. "National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children," About, POMC, October 29, 2020, <https://pomc.org/>.

10. "Stephen Ministries," About, Stephen Ministries, October 29, 2020, <https://www.stephenministries.org/default.cfm>.

great mission and in-depth training for those churches and individuals desiring to minister in this manner. This program's drawback is the expense: the church must pay a one-time fee to join, and then each person must attend a weeklong training at their own expense.

A third group that provides support to bereaved individuals is hospice.¹¹ Hospice provides physical care to the terminally ill individual; they also provide chaplain services (prayer, faith conversations, and counseling) to the bereaved family. Hospice also offers grief support groups for widows/widowers and orphans but does not have a support group specifically for parents grieving their child's death.

These three national programs and other groups not mentioned here seem to lack one thing: the authority to minister to a bereaved parent's physical, emotional, mental, *and* spiritual health. The question that begs to be answered here is, "where can a parent who is mourning the death of their child receive holistic care and support?" With such limited support available to these parents, it becomes even more essential that the church work diligently to fill the gap and initiate practices to provide long term support and emotional and spiritual guidance.

As a caring community of pastors, leaders, and believers, the church can provide holistic care to grieving parents as they navigate their journey of grief. In order to effectively minister to bereaved parents, the church must be knowledgeable in the scriptural foundations of grief and comfort. This theology of grief and comfort must provide tools for providing holistic, Christ-centered care that guides the church as they

11. "Hospice Foundation Of America - What Is Hospice?," About, Hospice Foundation of America, October 29, 2020, <https://hospicefoundation.org/Hospice-Care/Hospice-Services>.

accompany a bereaved parent along the path of grief to a place of wholeness that is rooted in the loving and saving grace of God.

Statement of Limitations

Within the context of congregational care, not a lot is written directly about the subject of parental grief and loss. However, an abundance of Scripture narratives makes the reality of parental grief clear. *The focus of this work is the creation of a biblical theology of parental grief and loss.* This work is not designed as an exhaustive tome cornering all nuances of grief, death, comfort, and hope that takes place daily in all lives. Neither will this work discuss grief associated with someone's parents, spouse, or siblings' death.

Additionally, this work will not discuss the circumstances of a child's death, whether it was the result of homicide, suicide, terminal illness, accidental death, vehicular collision, natural disaster, or any other specific event that resulted in the death. This work will not explore grief related to the loss of a child through parental rights termination, divorce, incarceration, adoption, or removal of foster children. This theological work will not focus on grief's psychological aspects, although it may be discussed to bring context and meaning. This theological work will be a therapeutic approach geared to assisting people in resolving their grief.

Contextual Scope

This work will engage in the exploration of the Holy Bible as it relates to grief, death, comfort, and hope. This engagement will create a healthy foundation for churches to engage with as they minister to the grieving in their congregations.

To everything *there is* a season, A time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, And a time to die; A time to plant, And a time to pluck *what is* planted; A time to kill, And a time to heal; A time to break down, And a time to build up; A time to weep, And a time to laugh; A time to mourn, And a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, And a time to gather stones; A time to embrace, And a time to refrain from embracing; A time to gain, And a time to lose; A time to keep, And a time to throw away; A time to tear, And a time to sew; A time to keep silence, And a time to speak; A time to love, And a time to hate; A time of war, And a time of peace (Eccl 3:1-8 (NKJV), emphasis added).

A well-grounded understanding of this passage indicates both a theology of suffering and theology of comfort inextricably intertwined in God's plan for humanity. This passage shows that for every negative occurrence, God has provided a positive way to recover. Suffering encompasses pain, loss, and grief. In contrast, comfort includes valuing people where they are in their grief, enveloping them in a community of accountability partners, and hope that God's promises will prevail in the midst of the storm.

This work will engage with hermeneutical studies of biblical themes, passages, characters, and customs related to grief, death, comfort, and hope. Within the theology of suffering, pain, loss, and suffering are essentially self-defined. Armed with the different definitions of crisis and suffering, compassionate people will notice that grieving individuals are suffering in all areas of their lives and not merely emotionally. When individuals become ensnared in the cycle of grief, they need gentle, loving guidance to emerge and live a new and productive life. As a theology of comfort is developed,

acknowledging people's value is necessary, and they need to be told they are valued.

When people suffer from low or lack of self-esteem, it is difficult for them to find their worth in anything, even in God. People tend to wonder how God could love them when they feel unimportant to others. Suffering people need others to come alongside to provide words of encouragement and affirmation and help them look for a sliver of light in their darkness. It is often not enough to say how much God loves the suffering people; it must be personalized.

This work will interact with the Old Testament, the New Testament, Hebrew texts, and Greek texts related to grief's theological foundation. Additionally, this work will interact with ancient and contemporary biblical scholars to explore customs, rites, rituals, and meanings related to the theology of grief, death, comfort, and hope.

Terminology Defined

Grief

Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut defined grief as "a primarily emotional (affective) reaction to the loss of a loved one through death. It is a normal, natural reaction" to the death of a significant person in the life of an individual.¹² As an emotional response, grief is an internal struggle that can and often does, present itself in psychological and physiological manifestations. John Archer wrote that grief is "the cost

12. Margaret S. Stroebe et al., "Bereavement Research: Contemporary Perspectives," in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention*, 1st ed. (Washington: American Psychological Association, 2008), 5.

we pay for being able to love in the way we do."¹³ For this project's purposes, grief is defined as a response to crisis, trauma, and loss, which causes physical and mental suffering, beginning with a physical removal that causes a ripple effect that touches a person's emotional, mental, intellectual, physical, and spiritual health. When those suffering permit themselves to publicly express their grief, it is done through mourning rituals and lamentations.

Suffering

To properly define suffering, it is essential to note that "suffering presupposes life."¹⁴ Without life, there can be no suffering. Noelia Bueno-Gomez defined suffering as "an unpleasant or even anguishing experience which severely affects a person at a psychophysical and an existential level," and while suffering may not be the result of "biological or observable circumstances [pain, distress, injury, loss], it is an embodied experience" felt through the rhythm of the heart.¹⁵ Richard Chapman and Jonathan Gavrin defined suffering as the "perception of serious threat or damage to the self," arguing that suffering "emerges when a discrepancy develops between what one expected of one's self and what one does or is."¹⁶ In this context, the words "suffering" and "grief" will be used interchangeably throughout this writing. What does or does not cause pain to

13. John Archer, *The Nature of Grief: The Evolution and Psychology of Reactions to Loss* (London: Routledge, 1999), 5.

14. Jurgen Moltmann, "Trinitarian Theology of the Cross," in *The Modern Theologian's Reader* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 92.

15. Noelia Bueno-Gómez, "Conceptualizing Suffering and Pain," *Philosophy, Ethics, and Humanities in Medicine* 12, no. 1 (September 29, 2017): 7.

16. C. Richard Chapman and Jonathan Gavrin, "Suffering: The Contributions of Persistent Pain," *The Lancet* 353, no. 9171 (June 26, 1999): 2233–2237.

one person will affect someone else differently. People's suffering and circumstances must be taken seriously in order to understand and comfort them effectively.¹⁷

Suffering can be gradual (terminal illness) or sudden (loss of employment), big (losing everything in a house fire) or small (loss of a sentimental object), conscious (choosing to leave a person or situation), or subconscious (depression, grief), cumulative (multiple traumatic events in a short period of time), real or objective (a person experiencing the death of a loved one, loss of job, loss of home or property, or loss of health), abstract or subjective (a person experiencing downsizing, a broken engagement, a robbery, or a child leaving for college), imagined (a person experiencing fear of repeated loss), threatened (a person experiencing child custody issues), or ambiguous (a person experiencing a kidnapping, running away, and emotionally absent family member).¹⁸

Pain

Pain and suffering are intrinsic in nature, described by James Porter Moreland and Scott Rae as "a private, subjective, felt, sentient state of hurtfulness," which is experienced through personal introspection.¹⁹ People get hurt emotionally and spiritually through "event causation," which Moreland and Rae defined as cause and effect.²⁰ The trauma of a loss in a family can cause a "mental state" to take over in the affected person's brain, which can have a domino effect on his or her emotional and physical well-

17. Randy Becton, *Does God Care When We Suffer? And Will He Do Anything about It?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1988), 100.

18. Scott Floyd, *Crisis Counseling: A Guide for Pastors and Professionals* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Ministry, 2008), 72–75.

19. James Porter Moreland and Scott B. Rae, *Body & Soul: Human Nature & the Crisis in Ethics* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 99.

20. Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 94.

being and can inhibit the person's ability to exercise free will.²¹ Essentially, trauma can hinder a person's capacity to think clearly or feel emotions and results in a vulnerability that enables others to coerce that person to make unwise decisions. Coerced decisions often are ones that may not have been made if that person's mind was not clouded with pain and grief.

Crisis

Kristi Kanel explained that a crisis consists of four components: "a precipitating event; a person's perception of the event as threatening or damaging; this perception leads to emotional distress; and the emotional distress leads to impairment in functioning due to an individual's coping methods."²² A precipitating event could include but is not limited to human development phases, an economic or political event, spiritual struggle, and everyday frustrations. A person's perception of an event can affect one's developmental, situational, existential, interpersonal, and spiritual life. A crisis, which is a temporary situation, can be the catalyst in a person's life when they arrive at a crossroads and decide.²³ Such a crisis usually indicates a negative or problematic state in which a person's coping mechanisms have failed and results in functional impairment.²⁴

21. Moreland and Rae, *Body and Soul*, 115.

22. Kristi Kanel, *A Guide to Crisis Intervention* (Cengage Learning, 2014), 2. Kanel developed the four components of crisis based on the work of Gerald Caplan (*An Approach to Community Mental Health*, 1961), Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (*Reason and Emotion in Psychotherapy* Revised, 1994), and Beck's Cognitive Therapy (*Cognitive Therapy and Emotional Disorders*, 1976).

23. Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*, 24–27.

24. Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*, 24–27.

Trauma

While a crisis is a perceptual, short-term response to life events, trauma is a subjective, long-lasting response that can arise from a single, sudden, unexpected event (e.g., a serious car accident, a natural disaster, being a victim of a crime, or the sudden death of a family member). In 2007, Siegfried Zepf and Florian D. Zepf authored an article for *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis* indicating that trauma does not have a concrete definition but appears to be a subjective response to an event. Zepf and Zepf referenced Sigmund Freud's definition of trauma as being "a violent attack damaging the organism from the outside;" and H. Oppenheim's *Die Traumatischen Neurosen* [The traumatic neuroses] (1889) introduction of the term trauma into "psychiatry to describe a state of corporeal and mental changes following an unexpected physical or psychical shock

Trauma can result in difficulty concentrating, flashbacks to the event(s), guilt, futurelessness, an altered world view/belief system, numbness, anger, sadness, hypervigilance, sleep and eating disturbances, overcautiousness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).²⁵

Loss

Loss is composed of the separation from or removal of something meaningful to an individual, which could consist of focus (relocation or a child leaving for college),

25. Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*, 50–59. Please note that trauma and grief associated with abortions, terminal illness, adoptive family displacement, a parent who has lost permanent custody of his or her child(ren), children who have lost parents at a young age, and parents of murderers will be researched at a later time.

attached value (lost sleep or lost finances), involuntary (helplessness or loss of a child), and permanence (declining health).²⁶ For this dissertation, crisis, trauma, and loss will be referred to collectively as *crises* and the result of these crises as *suffering*.

Mourning

Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut defined mourning as "social expressions or acts of expressing grief, which are shaped by the practices of a given society or cultural group."²⁷ In Scripture, the Hebrew word for mourning (*'ebel*) encompasses the mourning of the deceased, mourning rites, mourning garb, and the period of time necessary for mourning.²⁸ Public displays of mourning were acceptable and encouraged. Professional mourners were hired to attend funerals to express mourning for the deceased.²⁹ Based on these biblical foundations, it would stand to reason that mourners in modern culture should be permitted to express their grief for extended periods of time without harsh criticism.

Lament

Frances Klopper described a lament as "a vehicle for expressing the raw emotions that arise from pain so intense that it cannot be articulated in words. Just as pain and

26. Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*, 65–67.

27. Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut, "Culture and Grief," *Bereavement Care* 17, no. 1 (March 1, 1998): 7.

28. "Ebel," *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 5.

29. Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, eds., *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1803* (A.H. Clark Company, 1906), 337; Han Baltussen, "Personal Grief and Public Mourning in Plutarch's *Consolation to His Wife*," *American Journal of Philology* 130, no. 1 (2009): 79.

suffering are intrinsic to human existence, so also the expressing of pain is deeply human."³⁰ A lament consists of an "address and introductory petition, lament (I, you/God, they/foe), confession of trust, a petition (for favor, for intervention, motive), a vow of praise, and thanksgiving in anticipation."³¹ Claus Westermann defined a lament as "the language of suffering."³² By vocalizing laments, Christians allow God and His character to shape, reshape, or transform their suffering experience.³³ Denise Ackermann defined lament as "a language for dealing with, although not solving, the problem of suffering."³⁴ Lament encourages believers to grow increasingly dependent on and attached to God, cultivate the Fruit of the Spirit in their lives, and focus on the "teleological orientation that puts present suffering in perspective."³⁵ Biblical laments are not taught in most modern-day churches, leaving believers without a guidebook for suffering.³⁶ Lament is the vessel through which sufferers shift their focus from their circumstances to God and the work He is doing in their lives.

30. Frances Klopper, "Lament, the Language for Our Times," *Old Testament Essays* 21, no. 1 (2008): 125.

31. Tremper Longman and Peter Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, & Writings* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2008), 387.

32. Claus Westermann, *Lamentations: Issues and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 89.

33. M. Elizabeth Lewis-Hall, "Suffering in God's Presence: The Role of Lament in Transformation," *Journal of Spiritual Formation and Soul Care* 9, no. 2 (November 2016): 224.

34. Denise Ackermann, *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 100.

35. Hall, "Suffering in God's Presence," 221.

36. Hall, "Suffering in God's Presence," 221.

Hope

Hope and comfort are often used synonymously, but, in reality, the two words have different meanings. Carol Farran, Kaye Herth, and Judith Popovich defined hope as an "essential experience of the human condition" which consists of an individual's way of feeling, thinking, behaving, and relating to oneself and one's world and has the "ability to be fluid in its expectations, and in the event that the desired object or outcome does not occur, hope can still be present."³⁷

For Jurgen Moltmann, hope is a passion for the possible and cannot be separated from faith. Moltmann defined hope as the expectation of the promises of God that were believed in by faith.³⁸ Paul told the Romans that they should be rejoicing in hope (Rom 12:12, NKJV). The Greek word used here for hope is *elpis*, which can be translated as "joyful expectation."³⁹ God promises to bring hope to people when positive and negative pain is experienced. Christ provides hope for the believers to endure suffering through His death and resurrection. People who have accepted the promises of God by faith live in the hope offered by Christ through the Holy Spirit. Hope, expectation, and mercy are not physical comforts but are spiritual and emotional in nature.

37. Carol Farran, Kaye Herth, and Judith Popovich, *Hope and Hopelessness; Critical Clinical Constructs* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1995), 6.

38. Jurgen Moltmann, *Theology of Hope* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), 5.

39. Frederick William Danker, ed., "Elpis," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 319.

Comfort

Katharine Kolcaba defined comfort as the "state of being strengthened by having needs for relief, ease, and transcendence met" through physical, psychospiritual, sociocultural, and environmental experiences.⁴⁰ In order for a person to receive comfort, one must have a physical presence of a comforter offering tangible and intangible support.

In the Old Testament, comfort is translated from the Hebrew word *nacham*.⁴¹ When Jacob was informed of his son Joseph's death, he was deeply grieved. Even though his children attempted to comfort him, Jacob rejected their efforts and refused to take refuge in their physical presence (Gen 37:35). On the other hand, David rested in the comfort of the Lord's rod and staff, which were physical representations of God's presence in David's trials (Ps 23:4).

In the New Testament, the Greek word for comfort is *parakaleo*, which means to instill someone with courage or cheer.⁴² Jesus told the disciples that he had to leave but would send the Counselor to comfort them (John 14:25-27). When Paul greeted the church of Corinth, he described God as the one "who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves received from God" (2 Cor 1:4, NIV). In both the Old and New Testaments, comfort suggested that a

40. Katharine Kolcaba, "Holistic Comfort: Operationalizing the Construct as a Nurse-Sensitive Outcome," *Advances in Nursing Science* 15, no. 1 (September 1992): 1–10.

41. "Nacham," *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979), 636.

42. "Parakaleo," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 764–765.

comforter's physical presence is required to offer consolation to someone who is grieving or suffering.

Intended Research

This project began with explaining the terminology that will serve as the framework for the ensuing discussion concerning a theology for ministering to bereaved parents in the congregational setting. The basis of griefwork is understanding *theopraxis*, discerning the work of God in the midst of ordinary life. A thorough account of this crucial principle articulated how it will be helpful as an over-arching model for the investigation which follows.

This whole project consists of a critical reflection concerning the effort to incorporate a practical theology of suffering in solving a specific dilemma. The specific dilemma addressed here is concerned with facilitating the establishment of a lifestyle of dependence on God as parents grieve a child's death. The premise is that full incorporation of theology is a matter of spiritually discerning a genuine *theopraxis* amid the community of faith.

God has spoken through His Word. The revealed acts of history as chronicled in the Old and New Testament documents and illuminated by the inspiring power of the Holy Spirit to the reader are integral to the dialogue between God and humanity. No theological discussion is complete without considerable interaction with the biblical text and the principles gleaned from it. Since the Bible serves as the preeminent authority for Christian belief, comprehensive dialogue with those texts relevant to grief, loss, comfort, and hope must be addressed.

The hermeneutical task of dialogue with biblical texts should never be left solely to individuals but conducted in the community. With the publication of various opinions and the subsequent public critique that ensues, academic scholarship is a clear example of this kind of communal correction, which is essential in the dialogue process. This project, from its inception, has involved dialogue through arduous scholarship, dialogue between historical traditions of the church, and contemporary scholarly literature.

This dissertation is an embodiment of the practical outcome of critical reflection. With its good intentions and hypothetical solutions proposed in the final chapter, its completion provides a model for a thorough practical theology of parental grief and loss. However, the validity of these intentions can only be tested in their actual implementation.

Project Goals and Objectives

Research indicates that a chasm exists between what ministers and church leaders perceive to be the wants, needs, and expectations from churches, their ministries, and the available supports in those churches to parents who are grieving their child's death.⁴³ The purpose of this project is to illuminate a ministry's desperate need to adopt a biblical theology of parental grief experienced as a result of the death of a child. A thorough hermeneutical dissection of the Holy Scriptures will reveal how grieving parents turned to God for comfort and hope as the parents struggle to accept their child's death.

43. Sklar and Huneke, "Bereavement, Ministerial Attitudes," 95

This research aims to address parental grief by developing a biblical theology of parental grief and loss manual that incorporates both theological and historical practices from biblical times, the early church, and today. Such a plan should also address, at a minimum, the need to develop theologies of suffering and comfort, along with an understanding of the players involved, the offensive and defensive weapons available, and the approaches seen that bring freedom from the oppression of profound grief.

This doctoral research project will be focused on developing a foundational theology that will give voice and context to the critical issues surrounding grief, death, hope, and comfort from a biblical perspective. The following objectives will accomplish this:

1. Present a critical reflection on themes and topics throughout Scripture related to grief, death, hope, and comfort.
2. Examine the passages within Scripture to provide context and meaning through cultural analysis.
3. Evaluate Scriptural characters to determine humanity's reaction and God's actions, and humanity's interaction with God concerning grief, death, hope, and comfort.
4. Create a critical and foundational theology that will walk through the difficult questions and emotions experienced by grieving individuals and how to effectively minister to them and encourage grieving parents to remain engaged with their congregation as they seek healing, comfort, and developing a deeper relationship with Jesus.
5. Dialogue with and critique theologians about interactions between God and humanity as grief, death, hope, and comfort are experienced

Upon completing this dissertation, it is expected that a curriculum will be created for ministries to utilize in small group settings or as a training guide for those interested in grief work ministries.

CHAPTER TWO: THE PROJECT IN PERSPECTIVE

In order to provide a balanced representation of contemporary literature on suffering, this section will engage with experts in the areas of thanatology, psychology, Christian counseling, and parental grieving. The discussion will explore grief processing from a Christian counseling standpoint through the eyes of H. Norman Wright, James Petersen, Tim Clinton, David Opalewski, and C. S. Lewis. Child loss will be explored through Kristi Kanel, Ann Finkbeiner, Barbara Roberts, and Barbara Rosof. Behaviors and emotions of grieving individuals will be studied utilizing Kubler-Ross' grief model and the grief processing models produced by Therese Rando, William Worden, Simon Rubin, George Bonanno, Margaret Stroebe, and Hank Schut.

At the end of this discussion, readers will better understand how grief affects people physically, mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. This section is intended to provide a resource for pastors to be better equipped to minister to bereaved individuals in a more holistic manner. Providing ministers with information on child death and how it impacts the family will bring more awareness for groups geared explicitly to assisting grieving parents to the local church.

Historical

Throughout history, people have relied on the church to support them during times of crisis.⁴⁴ Margaret Gibelman and Sheldon Gelman published an article entitled "The Promise of Faith-Based Social-Services: Perception versus Reality," in which they remind their readers that social justice and humanitarianism began with the Levitical law, wherein scripture points out that believers have to care for the less fortunate among them (Lev 25:36).⁴⁵

Additionally, the New Testament quotes Jesus, informing his followers that they will always have the poor among them (Matt 26:11). Subsequently, the disciples of Jesus encourage Christians to visit orphans and widows in their distress (Jas. 1:27); instruct believers to do good to all people while there is an opportunity (Gal. 6:10), and remind Christ-followers to show hospitality to strangers (Heb. 13:2). Following the mandates set out in scripture, the Assemblies of God admonish their denomination to "emulate the nature of God, [because] it is ingrained in the church's DNA to show kindness, perform acts of charity and do good to others."⁴⁶ The United Methodist Church's benevolence policy states they come

alongside those who suffer from natural or human-caused disasters – be it famine, hurricane, war, flood, fire or other events—to alleviate suffering and to be a source of help and hope for those left most vulnerable. We provide relief,

44. The Nathan Cummings Fetzner Foundation sponsored a 1997 Gallup Poll to focus on spiritual concerns. The poll revealed that 36% of respondents believed clergy could provide spiritual support and comfort.

45. Margaret Gibelman and Sheldon Gelman, "The Promise of Faith-Based Social Services: Perception Versus Reality," *Social Thought* 22, no. 1 (2003): 6.

46. Rollie Dimos, "Empowering Stewardship: Benevolence Program Basics." Stewardship and Giving, Assemblies of God, 2020, <https://empoweringstewardship.com/en/Resources/Stewardship-Giving/Benevolence-Program-Basics>.

response and long-term recovery grants when these events overwhelm a community's ability to recover on their own.⁴⁷

The act of providing charity was deemed to be more critical than sacrificial rituals, so much so that the Vatican Council (1965) planned to bridge the chasm between people at opposite extremes through community service.⁴⁸ Thomas Harvey expounded on the Vatican Council's objective, stating, "it is a statement of commitment to be God's Kahal (people in Hebrew), a people called out to accomplish the common good. It permits faith-based communities to bridge extremes by direct service, social advocacy, and public education."⁴⁹

Some individuals sacrificed personally in order to provide for the needy and suffering. One such person was Olympias (368–408), a deaconess in the church at Constantinople, who used her inheritance to buy hundreds of slaves' freedom, give to the poor, relieve suffering, and build a monastery.⁵⁰

Herein lies the dichotomy: a mandate of the church is to assist suffering people when the need arises without allowing them to become dependent on the church and not recover from their need. The challenge for churches is to assist those in need "while maintaining accountability and stewardship over designated funds and avoiding unscrupulous con artists."⁵¹ Ralph and Muriel Pumphrey cautioned the compassionate

47. United Methodist Committee on Relief, "OUR WORK." Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church, 2020, <https://umcmmission.org/5253-2/>.

48. Gibelman and Gelman, "The Promise of Faith-Based Social Services," 7.

49. Thomas Harvey, *Government Promotion of Faith-Based Solutions to Social Problems: Partisan or Prophetic?* (Washington, DC: Aspen Institute, 1997), 21.

50. V.K. McCarty, "'The Pure 'Eye of Her Soul:' The Asceticism of the Deaconess Olympias as Reflected in the Writings of the Fathers," in *Orthodox Monasticism: Past and Present* (Theotokas Press, 2014), 2–3.

51. Dimos, "Empowering Stewardship."

regarding excessively assisting the needy by stating, "Alms which interfere with the necessity of industry, forethought, economy, and a proper self-denial is not only encouragements but causes of pauperism."⁵² As people who are in need and suffering reach out to the church, the church must utilize compassion interlaced with a great deal of wisdom to be good stewards of their resources. Congregations and clergy have voluntarily reached out to comfort those who have encountered tragedy.

Providing benevolence to others does not always indicate financial involvement. Many times, charity is provided through people who volunteer their time to assist those in need. For example, the Amish and Mennonite people will gather as a community to build a barn in one day. Other examples of people volunteering their time could include farmers who unite to harvest a neighbor's field or a community that purges their belongings to provide for a neighboring town that lost multiple homes to a tornado. These examples of giving fall in line with Moses Maimonides' (1135-1204) classification of charitable acts. Maimonides divided benevolence into eight degrees of giving, beginning with the one who helps with hesitant reluctance, moving through the levels of selflessness to the highest level being the one who has taught another to be self-sufficient and self-supporting.⁵³

Mobile Christian ministries like the Billy Graham Emergency Response Teams were created to be on location when a crisis occurs to comfort, counsel, and pray for those affected by natural disasters and other tragedies resulting in an enormous death

52. Ralph Pumphrey and Muriel Pumphrey, eds., *Heritage of American Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 77.

53. Gibelman and Gelman, "The Promise of Faith-Based Social Services," 7.

toll.⁵⁴ Researchers have found that spiritual support assists victims of mass shootings in similar ways that victims of natural disasters have been helped.⁵⁵

Christians have had varied responses to these tragedies, including rallying for gun control and pouring out love and prayers on the victims' relatives. These large response teams and rallies are group-oriented and short-term. Once the crisis has abated, some teams move on, leaving the victims' families to recover independently. Other ministries, such as the Billy Graham Association, Samaritan's Purse, and Convoy of Hope, do not abandon the community but take great pains in instituting long-term resource networks that ensure vitality returns to the community.

As the crisis subsides, large teams begin to withdraw, leaving the victims to find a new source of comfort. The local church can be positioned to assume the responsibility of caring for those affected. However, churches may be inadequately prepared for this influx, resulting in reduced effectiveness in meeting and ministering to those needs. It can be out of this lack of preparedness that familiar platitudes, such as "God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds," are spoken to suffering people. Although such phrases are scriptural, suffering individuals need physical demonstrations of comfort, not just words.

As people attempt to make sense of their suffering and grief, they often turn to one of two places: the church or the metaphysical realm to "provide a rationale for their

54. "Rapid Response Team." Mission, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 2018, <https://billygraham.org/what-we-do/evangelism-outreach/rapid-response-team/about/>.

55. Luis San Roman et al. "Religious Support Buffers the Indirect Negative Psychological Effects of Mass Shooting in Church-Affiliated Individuals." *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, vol. 11, no. 6 (September 2019): 572. <https://seu.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=2019-11865-001&site=ehost-live&scope=site>

losses."⁵⁶ Eric Lincoln describes the function of the institution of the church in its historical role as a "lyceum, conservatory, social service center, political academy, and financial institution."⁵⁷ However, the church may not be prepared to assist long term, which causes them to refer people to the local government agencies.

Beyond financial or situational hardship assistance, bereaved individuals may need to be provided with the tools necessary to understand their grief, develop coping and behavioral strategies, and refine their perception of the circumstances.⁵⁸ At the same time, grieving individuals require a safe space to "share emotions, provide empathetic listening, deal with emotions of loneliness and isolation, sorrow, pain, or anger, by allowing each group member to share their stories repeatedly, and to experience acceptance from the group."⁵⁹

Parental Grief and Suffering in Contemporary Literature

Suffering has been a part of humanity since the beginning and can become overwhelming as people lose hope. Hope is centered around an individual's emotional and spiritual life and can be found through faith in God and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Comfort is drawn from the physical presence of those who make themselves available to a sufferer. In a culture in which the words "dead" and "death" are considered morbid and are avoided, being a griever carries a negative stigma. The church can provide a road map to reconcile

56. Celeste M. Johnson, "African-American Teen Girls Grieve the Loss of Friends to Homicide: Meaning Making and Resilience," *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying* 61, no. 2 (February 2010): 131.

57 C. Eric Lincoln, "The Black Church and Black Self-Determination," Lecture Notes, The Association of Black Foundation Executives, 1989, 3.

58. Miri Nehari, Dorit Grebler, and Amos Toren, "A Voice Unheard: Grandparents' Grief over Children Who Died of Cancer," *Mortality* 12, no. 1 (February 2007): 68.

59. Nehari, Grebler, and Toren, "A Voice Unheard," 68.

those journeying the path of grief to the God who offers comfort and hope when humanity fails them.

Death

How death is defined depends on the context in which death is being discussed. The medical and legal communities will perceive death differently from religious communities. In his book *Theology, Death, and Dying*, Ray Anderson discussed death from four religions' perspectives. Anderson's work is not an exhaustive representation of the world's religions but merely a sampling of the more dominant religions. Hinduism regards death and life as forms of existence "which is not real ... life has a beginning ... therefore, death is not the loss of being as such, but merely the end of the illusion of life as existence in time."⁶⁰ In Buddhist theology, death provides liberty from "the cravings as sensations of life."⁶¹ Judaism places "both life and death within the created boundedness of historical and temporal existence."⁶² In contrast, Christians believe that there is eternal life for one's soul after the human body's death.

The religious community appears to define death directly related to the expected outcome, such as a release from human desires to a place of nirvana, heaven, hell, reincarnation, or another cosmic afterlife. In comparison, the medical and legal communities have relied on a more concrete delineation between life and death. In 1980, the Commission on Uniform State Laws created the Uniform Determination of Death Act

60. Ray S. Anderson, *Theology, Death and Dying* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986), 7.

61. Anderson, *Theology, Death and Dying*, 8.

62. Anderson, *Theology, Death and Dying*, 9.

(UDDA) to provide guidelines by which a person is officially deceased. According to the UDDA, the death of an individual will be determined when there is an

1. irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions, or
2. irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brain stem, is dead. A determination of death must be made in accordance with accepted medical standards.⁶³

Regardless of the perspective from which death is regarded, the result remains the same: the human body ceases to function. The difference in the viewpoint is in what happens at the end of life. Anderson concluded that "death places life within a definite framework of time, enabling the individual to measure the events of life with utmost seriousness."⁶⁴ Utilizing the medical, legal, and religious community's descriptions, death's working definition will be the irreversible cessation of physical bodily functions that *frees the spirit to exist outside of time*. For the Christian, that would mean dwelling in the heavenly realm with God for eternity.

Grief

During the course of life, each person will experience crises that will arise from positive or negative circumstances and will produce a danger or opportunity that will have a productive or unproductive result.⁶⁵ H. Norman Wright expounded on the positive and negative stressors that cause suffering when he wrote

life is composed of loss, gain, and acquisition, so not every loss or crisis stems from a negative situation but from natural life happenings such as changing jobs,

63. American Medical Association and American Bar Association, "Uniform Determination of Death Act," Lecture Notes, The National Conference of Commissioners of Uniform State Laws, 1980, 5. In the 1980s, following the recommendation of a presidential commission, all fifty states replaced previous cardiopulmonary definitions of death with one that also included total and irreversible cessation of brain function.

64. Anderson, *Theology, Death, and Dying*, 10.

65. Kanel, *A Guide to Crisis Intervention*, 1–3.

receiving a bad grade in school, obtaining a less-than-hoped-for raise, moving (including missionaries heading to or returning from the mission field), becoming ill, becoming a new teacher mid-semester, changing from an office with windows to one without, not finding success or achievement, a son's or daughter's going off to school; or losing an ideal, a dream, or a lifelong goal.⁶⁶

Grief and suffering arise from various sources: the loss of a job, the family moving to a new location, divorce, loss of a friendship, the loss of dreams, the loss of or the lack of finances, victimization, or death. Kenneth Haugk explained that people who have suffered from a crisis, trauma, or loss might be disappointed, depressed, sorrowful, physically ill, distressed, or experience misfortune.⁶⁷ The following scenario demonstrates the descriptions provided by Kanel, Wright, and Haugk:

A young teenager transitioning from middle to high school (a positive, natural life occurrence) encounters a natural crisis requiring her to adapt to the new routines and new teachers. Rather than embracing the opportunity to gain new friends and succeed in high school, the teenager becomes anxious (the danger) and hesitant to attend a new school. Reacting to the teenager's trepidation, the school provides a productive solution and assigns an intentional friend who will accompany the new student between classes and act as a guide to assist the teenager with transitioning to high school life. If the school did not understand the teenager's crisis, an inadequate response could have resulted in the teenager having extremely low self-esteem or even reluctance to complete high school.

As seen in the example above, the teenager successfully transitioned to a new normal under an experienced student's tutelage. People can often successfully navigate their crises without being overwhelmed by the loss, but having guidance along the journey makes the burden of suffering seem more bearable.⁶⁸

66. H. Norman Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling: What to Do and Say When It Matters Most!* Updated, Expanded. (Bloomington, Minnesota: Bethany House Publishers, 2011), 66.

67. Kenneth C. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs to a Heavy Heart* (St. Louis, Missouri: Stephen Ministries Press, 2004), 15.

68. George A Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness: What the New Science of Bereavement Tells Us about Life after Loss* (New York: Basic Books, 2009), 7.

Just as there are natural, life-cycle losses, sudden and untimely losses can throw people off balance emotionally. David Opalewski categorized sudden losses occurring due to motor vehicle collisions, firearm-related incidents, or fast-acting illnesses.⁶⁹ Though Opalewski's categories encompass a great variety of losses, the underlying theme seems to be the loss of human life. However, Opalewski did not mention losses stemming from natural causes such as fires, floods, hurricanes, and pandemics, as well as economic downturns, disputes over relationships or property, and human error.

Therese Rando explained five clinical implications of grieving as follows:

1. Grief is experienced in four significant ways: psychologically (through affects, cognitions, perceptions, attitudes, and philosophy/spirituality), behaviorally (through personal action, conduct, or demeanor), socially (through reactions to and interactions with others), and physically (through bodily symptoms and physical health).
2. Grief is a continuing development. It is not a static state; instead, it involves many changes over time.
3. Grief is a natural, expectable reaction. When warranted by the factors circumscribing the loss, the absence of it is abnormal and indicative of pathology.
4. Grief is a reaction to all types of loss, not just death. Death is one example of loss, albeit the most dramatic one.
5. Grief is dependent upon the individual's unique perception of loss. The loss does not need to be socially recognized or validated by others for the individual to grieve, although it is most helpful when this can occur.⁷⁰

69. David A. Opalewski, *Understanding and Addressing Adolescent Grief Issues—Grades Middle and High School*, 1st ed. (Chattanooga: National Center for Youth Issues, 2007), 13.

70. Therese A. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, (Champaign, IL, US: Research Press, 1993), 22.

The Stigma of Grief

Typically, the first emotions experienced in the moment of loss are shock and denial (emotions related to grief will be discussed later in this section). People may say that they cannot believe their job ended, they must relocate, their car needs to be replaced, or even a loved one has died. Eberhard Jungel summarized the shock and denial of loss as "mute ... and it renders us speechless."⁷¹ Once the initial shock has worn off and someone begins to express their emotions of loss, suffering, and grieving publicly, it leaves that person open to shaming and feeling as if grief is a topic almost too taboo to discuss.⁷² Expressions of grief may include weeping, lamenting, wearing mourning clothes, and having a general aura of sadness.

Therese Rando wrote that society in the United States cultivates the attitude that "death is antithetical to living and that it is not a natural part of human existence," which leads the American population to take great pains to shield themselves from the realities of death.⁷³ Cultural signals could be deciphered as discouragement or shame in visible grieving.⁷⁴ Cultural shaming can include shaming when a person cries, stating that the bereaved should get over the loss or death, the bereaved ought to leave the deceased in the past, the bereaved ought to forget about the deceased, and the bereaved ought to move on from the memories of the deceased.

71. Eberhard Jungel, *Death: The Riddle and the Mystery*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974), preface.

72. Stroebe, et al. "Bereavement Research," 21.

73. Therese A. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death: Clinical Interventions for Caregivers*, (Champaign, Ill: Research Press, 1984), 5.

74. Darren Daugherty, *When God Became ApParent* (Fairfax, Virginia: Xulon Press, 2003), 46.

The stigma often attached to death by society may inhibit the grieving person's ability to move forward.⁷⁵ Friends, family, and strangers often utilize a litany of alternative phrases such as "passed on, passed over, passed away, deceased, gone, in heaven, on the other side, no longer with us, sleeping forever, lost, taken, kicked the bucket, bought it, [and] terminal."⁷⁶ However, as Barbara Roberts shared, the words dead, death, died, and dying are often considered to be too final and harsh to be uttered but are necessary to bring a certain sense of closure to the event of the death, not the emotional journey of grief.

The media can encourage bereaved individuals to remain stationary in their grief through the constant portrayal and encouragement of the bereaved person's anger and bitterness over the circumstances surrounding a death. In the case of a homicide, reporters arrive at the courthouse and surround the bereaved family and pummel the family with numerous questions surrounding feelings. During court proceedings, a bereaved family is continually reminded of their tragedy, and the wound of their grief is constantly ripped open and refreshed. The family is then subjected to seeing and hearing their emotions repeatedly as the news outlets continually replay the story.

The bereaved family is left to nurse the open wound and re-experience the emotions previously reconciled. The onslaught can lead the bereaved to isolate

75. Anna C. Meyer, Constance Opoku, and Katherine J. Gold, "'They Say I Should Not Think About It:' A Qualitative Study Exploring the Experience of Infant Loss for Bereaved Mothers in Kumasi, Ghana," *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying* 77, no. 3 (August 2018): 268. The authors cited several studies that indicate the trend of discouraging conversation regarding death is changing in high-income countries but remains constant in lower-income countries. The authors also admitted that limited research is available on this trend.

76. Barbara K. Roberts, *Death Without Denial, Grief Without Apology: A Guide for Facing Death and Loss*, (Troutdale, Or: NewSage Press, 2002), 4–5.

themselves from the world, procrastinate necessary activities, and engage in mindless and energy-saving tasks to avoid the pain created.

Processing Grief

Loss and crisis occur regularly throughout one's life, which may create a ripple effect that draws in those around the person that was directly affected.⁷⁷ The ripples of loss and death spread out to an oft-forgotten group of people: siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, classmates, teachers, school bus drivers, church groups, athletic teams, and participants in any other activity that included the deceased. When grief and crisis occur as a result of a crime, suffering is not only felt by the victim's family, but the perpetrator's family is often impacted as well.

In 1990, a study was published indicating that twenty percent of violent crime victims sought counsel from clergy members; of that twenty percent, forty-six percent deemed clergy counsel very helpful.⁷⁸ Subsequently, the surgeon general reported five percent of Americans sought mental health support from social service agencies, schools, or religious or self-help groups, which leaves a critical gap between those who need service and those who receive service.⁷⁹ Assistance from secular agencies can result in short-term solutions rather than long term, workable solutions geared to providing the needy with the ability to move forward from their crisis. Additionally, a two-year study

77. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 15.

78. Fran H. Norris, Krzysztof Z. Kaniasty, and Deborah A. Scheer, "Use of Mental Health Services among Victims of Crime: Frequency, Correlates, and Subsequent Recovery," *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 58, no. 5 (October 1990): 542.

79. David Satcher, "Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General--Executive Summary," *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* 31, no. 1 (February 2000): 8.

was conducted to determine the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affecting parents who were grieving the violent deaths of their 12- to 28-year-old children. The researchers found that

Both parents' gender and children's causes of death significantly affected the prevalence of PTSD symptoms. Twice as many mothers and fathers whose children were murdered met PTSD caseness (full diagnostic) criteria compared with accident and suicide bereavement. Symptoms in the re-experiencing domain were the most commonly reported. PTSD symptoms persisted over time, with 21% of the mothers and 14% of the fathers who provided longitudinal data still meeting caseness criteria two years after the deaths.⁸⁰

It is perplexing to see five percent of the population seeking mental health assistance. In comparison, twenty-one percent of grieving mothers and fourteen percent of bereaved fathers continued to experience mental health crises, including PTSD, two or more years after their children's death.

Kristi Kanel indicated that "normal grief" would manifest itself through a person's

Feelings: sadness, anger, guilt, and self-reproach; anxiety, including death awareness and phobia; loneliness, fatigue, helplessness; shock—particularly with sudden death; yearning and pining; emancipation, which can be a positive response; relief, particularly from suffering; and numbness.

Physical Sensations: Hollowness in the stomach, tightness in the chest and throat, sense of depersonalization, breathlessness, and muscle weakness.

Cognitions: Disbelief, confusion, preoccupation, sense of presence, hallucinations (usually transient).

Behaviors: sleep disturbances, such as early morning awakenings; appetite disturbances; absent-minded behaviors; social withdrawal (usually short-lived); dreams of the deceased; restless overactivity; sighing or crying; fear of losing memories; treasuring objects.⁸¹

80. Shirley A. Murphy et al., "PTSD Among Bereaved Parents Following the Violent Deaths of Their 12- to 28-Year-Old Children: A Longitudinal Prospective Analysis," *Journal of Traumatic Stress* 12, no. 2 (April 1999): 273.

81. Kanel, *Crisis Intervention*, 139–140.

Grief, in and of itself, is difficult to process. However, when there is an added layer of traumatic circumstances, people may retreat and become isolated as a method of self-preservation. June Cerza poetically and devotionally describes the grief that is associated with the death of a loved one as a "mortal wound [which is] difficult to grasp and impossible to understand; ... unasked for, unplanned for, and unwanted."⁸² Although grief does not truly create a mortal wound as Cerza describes it, traumatic circumstances can create the physical condition "stress cardiomyopathy," more commonly known as the "broken-heart syndrome," which may mimic the symptoms of a heart attack.⁸³

Individuals who experience losses are suddenly thrust into a world of strange and unexpected emotions as they learn to navigate the unknown territory. A person's sense of safety, security, and control is challenged when unexpected variables occur that force that person to adapt to new life circumstances to accommodate the loss experienced.

To move forward in life after the experience of a loss or a death, one must navigate the emotions of grief.⁸⁴ George Bonanno's research has identified four different patterns of grief:

1. *Resilience*: Resilient individuals experience immediate grief over their loss but only for a brief time and return quickly to their previous functioning levels.
2. *Recovery*: In the recovery pattern, the individual experiences profound sadness and grief that dissipate more slowly.
3. *Chronic dysfunction*: In this case, a traumatic grief experience leads to a long-term disruption of functioning in important life domains.

82. June Cerza Kolf, *When Will I Stop Hurting?: Dealing with a Recent Death*, (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2002), 11–12.

83. "What Is 'Broken-Heart Syndrome?' This Reversible Heart Condition - Which Mimics a Heart Attack-Is Being Recognized with Increasing Frequency.," *Harvard Heart Letter* 29, no. 4 (2018): 6.

84. Donna S Davenport, "A Closer Look at the 'Healthy' Grieving Process," *JCAD The Personnel and Guidance Journal* 59, no. 6 (1981): 333.

4. *Delayed grief or trauma*: Some individuals do not experience the sadness or distress evoked by a loss immediately following that loss. Instead, these intense feelings may come over the person weeks or even months later.⁸⁵

The emotional (affective) response to the death of a loved one is referred to as grief.⁸⁶ Without successfully navigating these grieving emotions, people may remain stuck in their sorrow. Often the root of this destructive behavior is a "confusing and perplexing fear."⁸⁷ Self-sabotage "has a mission—to hinder, obstruct, waste, or destroy" in order to prevent success. Avoiding grief can lead to pathological and delayed grief syndromes.⁸⁸ Syndromes can include overwhelming terror, chronic dysfunction, and delayed grief or trauma. According to a study published in 2012, researchers found that while traditional "trauma-focused" therapy assisted the bereaved in finding meaning in their loss, it did little to move people forward in their grief or encourage them to engage in "restoration-oriented behaviors."⁸⁹

Some experts such as William Worden and Therese Rando have written therapy models that encourage grief processing to resolve pathological and emotional syndromes caused by prolonged or complicated grief. Each of these experts explores grief and the "stages" of recovery from a clinical perspective in which the steps to recovery seem to be linear and intellectual.

William Worden identified four tasks that the bereaved must move through to process their grief: accept the reality of the death, work through the pain of grief, adjust

85. Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 28

86. Stroebe et al., "Bereavement Research," 5.

87. H. Norman Wright, *When the Past Won't Let You Go: Find the Healing That Helps You Move On* (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2016), 84.

88. Charles Burton et al. "Coping Flexibility and Complicated Grief: A Comparison of American and Chinese Samples," *Depression & Anxiety* (1091-4269) 29, no. 1 (January 2012): 17.

89. Burton et al., "Coping Flexibility and Complicated Grief," 21.

to life without the deceased, and maintain a connection to the deceased while moving forward with life.⁹⁰ Worden's mourning tasks appear to be focused on cognitive and behavioral elements of recovery but make allowances for grieving's emotional aspect. On the other hand, Rando's six "Rs" of mourning seem to require intellectual processing in order to make sense of grief: recognize the death, react emotionally, recollect and re-experience, relinquish, readjust, and reinvest.⁹¹ Both Worden's and Rando's models of grief recovery will be explored in the section on acceptance.

Simon Rubin created the model of grief recovery therapy, which incorporates a two-track model of mourning in which the "overt and covert aspects" impact an individual's response to grief.⁹² The overt aspect of grief is found in biological, psychological, and social responses to bereavement. In the first track, Rubin referenced Sigmund Freud's discussion of grief being the "heart response to loss" and expanded that response to include the psychiatric, emotional, interpersonal, or cognitive challenges that arise from separation from the deceased.⁹³ The biopsychosocial responses include anxiety, depression, somatic or sleeping concerns, traumatic responses like PTSD or acute stress disorder, self-esteem, the structure of values, worldview, spirituality and religious understanding, and investment in life tasks such as growth, motivation, and energy.

Rubin's second track addresses the biological, behavioral, cognitive, and emotional functioning and the ability to recover from the death and resume life activities.⁹⁴ Tasks in

90. J. William Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy, Fifth Edition: A Handbook for the Mental Health Practitioner* (Chambersburg, PA, Springer Publishing Company, 2018), 39–52.

91. Therese A. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 40–50.

92. Simon Shimshon Rubin, "The Two-Track Model of Bereavement: Overview, Retrospect, and Prospect.," *Death Studies* 23, no. 8 (December 1999): 681.

93. Rubin, "The Two-Track Model of Bereavement," 683.

94. Rubin, "The Two-Track Model of Bereavement," 684.

the second track include the nature, character, and strength of the desired connection with the deceased; how and what is remembered of the deceased; negative and positive perceptions and affect when thinking about the deceased; extended time invested in thinking about or being preoccupied with the deceased; the impact of the death and surrounding circumstances on the bereaved person's self-esteem and self-worth; and meaningful ways to memorialize the deceased.

The third group of experts such as John Bowlby, Erich Lindemann, Margaret Stroebe, Hank Schut, and Elisabeth Kubler-Ross have assisted bereaved individuals in navigating their grief through the categorization of the emotions associated with mourning: denial, isolation, numbness, shock, yearning, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance.⁹⁵

Lindemann, a forerunner in grief processing research, identified six characteristics of grief: somatic distress; preoccupation with the image of the deceased; guilt; hostile reactions; loss of patterns of conduct; and the appearance of traits of the deceased's behaviors in the bereaved.⁹⁶ He organized grief recovery into three stages: shock and disbelief, acute mourning, and the grief process's resolution.⁹⁷ Bowlby's attachment theory furthered Lindemann's theory by organizing grief into four phases: numbness, yearning and searching, disorganization and despair, and reorganization.⁹⁸ Bowlby's

95. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (London; New York: Routledge, 1973), 6; Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, 24–25; Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut, “The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement: A Decade On,” *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying* 61, no. 4 (May 2010): 273–289.

96. Erich Lindemann, “Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 5, no. 3 (Fall 1951): 19–31.

97. Lindemann, “Symptomatology and Management of Acute Grief,” 19–31.

98. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, 25.

theory had a significant impact on the field of bereavement and has been widely utilized in counseling and therapy programs.⁹⁹

Stroebe and Schut developed a dual-process model of bereavement and identified grief-oriented activities and stressors associated with bereavement to include crying, yearning, sadness, denial, anger, dwelling on the circumstances of the death, and avoiding restoration activities.¹⁰⁰ This approach is vastly different from other grief work theories. Bonanno, Worden, Rando, Rubin, Lindemann, Bowlby, and even Kubler-Ross focus on grief work as steps, stages, or tasks that an individual must complete.

While the first group of mourning experts focused on mourning's cognitive and behavioral aspects and another group focused on the emotional facet of grief, Rubin's model for mourning may be the most balanced approach to grief recovery. Rubin brings the intellectual and emotional facets into his model, which would be more conducive to treating bereavement more holistically. Stroebe and Schut took recovery to another level when they recognized the value of being part of a community to facilitate progression through the grief journey.¹⁰¹

Rubin indicated that bereaved individuals need to be treated holistically. Koenig stated that religion and spirituality play a vital role in an individual's overall health and wellbeing.¹⁰² Stroebe and Schut believed there is a social or community aspect to grief work. These three grief recovery conclusions are important in and of themselves;

99. Margaret Stroebe and Henk Schut, "The Dual Process Model of Coping with Bereavement: Rationale and Description," *Death Studies; Abingdon* 23, no. 3 (May 1999): 198.

100. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 211–216.

101. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 202.

102. Harold Koenig and Malcolm McConnell, *The Healing Power of Faith: How Belief and Prayer Can Help You Triumph Over Disease*, Reprint. (New York London Toronto Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 34.

however, combining them creates a different concept. The place where a person can find holistic treatments, religion, spirituality, and community is the local church. Although not a medical facility, the church can provide physical help to those who need it, counseling and guidance to those in need of emotional and mental support, sound doctrine and teachings to enable spiritual healing and growth, and a place of community where a person can feel accepted.

Emotional "Stages" of Grief

Bereaved individuals need to understand that it is okay to grieve and admit they struggle with their emotions. However, it is not acceptable to remain in that same place emotionally. Refusing or being unable to move forward in one's grieving journey results in grief avoidance, which is dishonest because the bereaved

pretend not to grieve because our culture says, "Get over it." We hide our negative thoughts and feelings because we want to be good Christians. So, we use only pretty words even when we feel ugly inside. Perhaps we are all just being polite. After all, we could be honest with ourselves and still use polite, positive, and pretty words.¹⁰³

Everyone will experience grief at some point in life and need to be encouraged to process that grief.¹⁰⁴ The majority of people will experience "normal grief" and are resilient enough to overcome the shock of the incident or death and gradually accept the loss's reality and finality.¹⁰⁵ People may develop cognitive issues when they do not find

103. T. C. Ham, "Songs of Brokenness to the Healing God," *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 9, no. 2 (Fall 2016): 235.

104. Granger E. Westberg, *Good Grief* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 16.

105. Holly G Prigerson, Lauren Vanderwerker, and Paul Maciejewski, "A Case for Inclusion of Prolonged Grief Disorder in DSM - V," in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 168. In the aforementioned article, Prigerson asserts that "80% to 90% of bereaved individuals experience normal grief" and cites the

meaning in their suffering, and unresolved emotions will have to be dealt with at some point in the future.¹⁰⁶ Scott Floyd described cognitive issues as including, but not limited to, difficulty concentrating, flashbacks, reacting to similar circumstances, guilt, futurelessness, and an altered worldview or belief system.¹⁰⁷

Selby Jacobs, a psychiatrist and professor at Yale University created a timeline that bereaved individuals "normally" follow based on his research.¹⁰⁸ Holly Prigerson utilized Jacobs's timeline to produce a hypothesized resolution of grief based on Bowlby's attachment theory. In Prigerson's adapted timeline, the bereaved experience resolution of their emotional stages within a specified time period.

1. disbelief begins at a moderate level and tapers off within the first three months of grieving;
2. yearning for the deceased person begins to taper off within the first three months but may take up to eighteen months to plateau;
3. anger escalates around the fourth month, peaks around month six or seven, but tapers off to complete resolution by month twenty;
4. depression generally sets in after month three, plateaus for six to nine months, peaks around the first anniversary of the death and begins to taper off to resolution by month twenty; and
5. acceptance and recovery begin around the third month posthumous, plateaus from months six to month fifteen, and continues to resolve as the bereaved individuals create a new normal.¹⁰⁹

following research articles as her source: Prigerson H, "Complicated Grief When the Path of Adjustment Leads to a Dead End," *Healthcare Counselling & Psychotherapy Journal* 5, no. 3 (July 2005): 10–13; Lisa Barry, Stanislav Kasl, and Holly G Prigerson, "Psychiatric Disorders among Bereaved Persons: The Role of Perceived Circumstances of Death and Preparedness for Death.," *The American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* 10, no. 4 (July 2002AD): 447–457; Amy E. Latham and Holly G. Prigerson, "Suicidality and Bereavement: Complicated Grief as Psychiatric Disorder Presenting Greatest Risk for Suicidality," *Suicide and Life-Threatening Behavior* 34, no. 4 (2004): 350–362.

106. Deborah Proffitt et al. "Judeo-Christian Clergy and Personal Crisis: Religion, Posttraumatic Growth and Well Being," *Journal of Religion and Health* 46, no. 2 (June 2007): 228.

107. Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*, 50–52.

108. Selby Jacobs, *Pathologic Grief: Maladaptation to Loss* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1993), 17.

109. Prigerson, Vanderwerker, and Maciejewski, "Prolonged Grief," 169.

The timeline provides a guideline for the regular or average grieving process. Not everyone will follow this pattern. Each person will process grief differently and may randomly move back and forth between the emotions on the journey to and through acceptance. Additionally, life transitions and traumatic experiences may impact the length of time it takes someone to recover or resolve a particular emotion. The critical thing to remember is to not remain stagnant in a particular emotion or stage. When a person remains "stuck" on an emotion, professional assistance may be required to move beyond the plateau and continue on the path to resolution.

George Bonanno admitted that there are people who become so overwhelmed with grief that it is almost impossible for them to re-establish "normal daily routines."¹¹⁰

Rando indicated that

Any particular grief response expresses one or a combination of four things: (a) the mourner's feelings about the loss and the deprivation it causes (e.g. Sorrow, depression, guilt); (b) the mourner's protest at the loss and wish to undo it and have it not be true (e.g. anger, searching, preoccupation with the deceased); (c) the effects caused by the assault on the mourner as a result of the loss (e.g. disorganization and confusion, fear and anxiety, physical symptoms); and the mourner's personal actions stimulated by these first three (e.g. crying, social withdrawal, increased use of medication and/or psychoactive substances).¹¹¹

In her book *On Death and Dying*, Elisabeth Kubler-Ross identified five stages of grief: denial, depression, anger, bargaining, and acceptance. Kubler-Ross' research provided the foundation for grief work and became the framework for counselors guiding people along their grief journey. These stages identified by Kubler-Ross are not concrete

110. Bonanno, *The Other Side of Sadness*, 6.

111. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 22.

in their order, as bereaved individuals will vacillate between the emotions as they continue to process their grief.

Denial and shock. According to Kubler-Ross, denial and shock represent the first stage of grief and usually occur immediately upon being informed of a loved one's death. Erich Lindemann agreed with Kubler-Ross that shock and disbelief were the first stage of grief and were recognized as the inability to accept the loss of a loved one and the occasional denial that the loss has occurred.¹¹² John Bowlby acknowledged a phase in grief processing as a place of numbness, where "varying degrees of denial of the loss are usually present."¹¹³ A person's initial reaction is usually shocked that a terrible thing is happening to them. Shock is immediately followed by denial and making statements like: "I never thought this would happen to me!" "Why me?" "Why them?" "How could this happen?" "No! Not me!" or "I just don't believe it!" When a person experiences this stage, it "functions as a buffer after unexpected, shocking news."¹¹⁴ The physiological and psychological buffering gives a person the time and space needed to gather their thoughts and react more rationally and less emotionally.

Isolation (intentional or unintentional). Along with denial and shock, Kubler-Ross includes isolation in stage one of the grieving process. However, because Lindemann and Bowlby do not address isolation in their first stage of grief, isolation will be examined

112. Lindemann, "Acute Grief," 24.

113. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, 25.

114. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 52.

separately from denial and shock.

As people move through their initial reaction to a loved one's death, isolation can occur intentionally or unintentionally. Intentional isolation is when the bereaved person deliberately avoids contact with other people. There is a sense that no one else understands how grief feels, and it becomes easier to stay away than to listen to people's urging to move on with their life or to "get over it already." Being around other people and places may be reminders of a reality the bereaved individual may not want or be ready to face at this point. Unintentional isolation occurs when people begin to drift away from the bereaved. People will not know how to deal with the death and begin to avoid the bereaved to help themselves move forward in their own grieving or avoid the subject altogether.¹¹⁵ Friendships that were based on the common interest of children will fade away without the presence of a child.¹¹⁶ Isolation can be prolonged and even permanent if not addressed.

Denying the truth about death can be costly. Denial wastes the freedom to share feelings with loved ones, squanders the gift of time, restricts options for the future, and robs blessings from the mourner.¹¹⁷ The purpose of grief is to move past one's emotions, face the loss, and adapt to a new lifestyle.¹¹⁸ John Douglas Hall argued that first-world society currently lacks the capacity to suffer, "including the incapacity to acknowledge,

115. Martin Lunghi, "Ontology and Magic: A Conceptual Exploration of Denial Following Bereavement," *Mortality* 11, no. 1 (2006): 54.

116. Ann Finkbeiner, *After the Death of a Child: Living with Loss Through the Years* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1996), 99.

117. Roberts, *Death Without Denial*, 23.

118. Stroebe and Schut, "The Dual Process Model," 199.

accept, and articulate" suffering.¹¹⁹ People tend to be more focused on the positive aspects of life, yet loss is all around them, and they need to recognize, understand, and grieve "any event that destroys a person's understanding of the meaning of life."¹²⁰ H. Norman Wright wrote, "The terrible reality of severe trauma is that it often eradicates the existence of positive, healing memories."¹²¹ Wright continued this thought by saying that "traumatized people have alterations in their brains. Memory is affected, which often creates lapses and deficits in verbal ability and short-term memory. Trauma is intrusive and invasive. It interrupts and derails us."¹²²

Fear. Many people fear facing their mortality and are not comfortable discussing such morbid topics. In his work *A Grief Observed*, C. S. Lewis described the journey of grief as a "long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape."¹²³ This new landscape can be new emotions (whether positive or negative), new memories, or new opportunities to engage.

As one engages with the emotions that accompany the journey, grief bears a resemblance to the physical and psychological manifestations as the emotion of fear. Lewis continued by stating that grief's emotional journey is similar to fear, where the bereaved experiences the same fluttering stomach, restlessness, yawning, and nervous swallowing.¹²⁴ Lewis also pointed out that fear experienced during grief is sometimes the

119. Douglas John Hall, *God & Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986), 46.

120. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 65.

121. Wright, *When the Past Won't Let You Go*, 20.

122. Wright, *When the Past Won't Let You Go*, 94.

123. C. S. Lewis, *A Grief Observed* (San Francisco: HarperOne, 2001), 69.

124. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, I.

"fear of going places where you had been happy" and that religion's consolations are indicators that the orator does not understand.¹²⁵ C. S. Lewis said that "thought is never static, pain often is."¹²⁶ These fear-like feelings that Lewis described should not be confused with the emotion of fear that may present itself.

What, then, is fear?¹²⁷ In his technical paper, Dr. R. Michael Fisher found that many English dictionaries identified fear as a feeling or emotion or a lump of emotion.¹²⁸ Fisher pointed out that fear is more of a conceptual idea with subjective and objective properties that differs from person to person and that defining "fear" is like trying to define "Love," except the former is likely to be a thousand times more beneficial to human liberation.¹²⁹ Charles Darwin regarded fear as "the most depressing of all the emotions, and it soon induces utter helpless prostration."¹³⁰

In 1944, sociologist Kurt Reiszler defined fear as "a fear of something or for something: of illness, loss of money, dishonor; for his health, family social status. The relation of the first is something to the second, and their respective relevancies determine the particular kind and intensity of our fear."¹³¹ Psychologists Charles Spielberger and Eric Reheiser summarized that "Darwin and Freud considered fear (anxiety), anger

125. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 11, 28.

126. Lewis, *A Grief Observed*, 47.

127. It is important to note that the question "What is fear?" is not meant to be an exhaustive study on grief and perimeters of the clinical aspects of grief. The discussion on fear is explored to provide a perspective of how fear-like symptoms are experienced during the grieving process and may produce fear of death or mortality anxieties in the survivors.

128. R Michael Fisher, *Introduction to Defining "Fear": A Spectrum Approach* (Carbondale, IL: In Search of Fearlessness Research Institute, 1995), 8.

129. Fisher, *Introduction to Defining "Fear,"* 7.

130. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), 81.

131. Kurt Reiszler, "The Social Psychology of Fear," *American Journal of Sociology* 49, no. 6 (1944): 489.

(hostility, rage), and depression (melancholia) to be actual emotional states that had powerful effects on thoughts and behavior.¹³²

In lieu of the fact that the father of psychology was unable to offer a concrete definition of fear, how is it possible to treat an emotion that appears to be undefinable? It would appear that fear is defined concerning the incident which produced the fear: psychological trauma may produce traumatic fears such as extreme fear or terror, obsessive fear, pervasive fear, specific fear, sudden panic or distress, separation anxiety, physiological reactivity, and fear denial.¹³³ Traumatic fears may be treated per the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), which mental health professionals utilize as a primary diagnostic tool as they diagnose patients.

The emotion of fear produces a more definable feeling: anxiety. Reisler provided the origination of the term anxiety:

The German *angst*, the French *angoisse*, the English *anguish*, and the Latin *angustiae* all stem from a root which connotes 'pressure,' 'narrowness.' The corresponding word in Greek, used with some emphasis by the Christian fathers, is *stenochoria*, 'the narrow space.' Man's chest feels constricted. Anxiety closes wall in on man.¹³⁴

With its feeling of being constricted (and other physical manifestations), anxiety is manageable through cognitive and behavioral therapies.¹³⁵ A variety of prescription medications to treat anxiety are available through a person's medical doctor.

132. Charles D. Spielberger and Eric C. Reheiser, "Assessment of Emotions: Anxiety, Anger, Depression, and Curiosity," *Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being* 1, no. 3 (September 2009): 274.

133. Cynthia Monahan, *Children and Trauma: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997), 24–27.

134. Riezler, "Social Psychology," 491.

135. Laura Campbell-Sills and David H. Barlow, "Incorporating Emotion Regulation into Conceptualizations and Treatments of Anxiety and Mood Disorders," in *Handbook of Emotion Regulation* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), 542.

Anger.

The next phase of grieving is anger, which includes anger, rage, envy, and resentment.¹³⁶ Bowlby also includes irritability, tension, and disbelief in this stage of grief.¹³⁷ A common trait of this stage is the "blame game." Kubler-Ross wrote, "anger is displaced in all directions and projected onto the environment at times almost randomly."¹³⁸ Blame could potentially be incorrectly placed on whoever was involved in the case of the deceased.¹³⁹ Doctors could have / should have done more. The authorities could have prevented it if they had listened and intervened. A parent is to blame for the death because they were not watching closely enough. The friend was driving too fast and became irresponsible.

Although the bereaved are attempting to channel their emotions, the blame game can cause irreparable division between family and friends. At times, the bereaved will be angry with themselves for their lack of action, feeling that they should have done more, said something different, did something different or listened more. They wish for more time and the chance to say things to the deceased and do things with them, and they "seethe" about the "unfair losses" which displace and orphan them.¹⁴⁰

The anger of the grieving masks both hurt and caring and tends to put others off. Rather than falling for the trap of being put off by an individual's mask, the comforter would need to realize that the bereaved person is in pain and needs a great deal of care.

136. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 63.

137. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, 25.

138. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 64.

139. Nancy Weinberg, "Self-Blame, Other Blame, and Desire for Revenge: Factors in Recovery from Bereavement.," *Death Studies* 18, no. 6 (1994): 584.

140. Walter Brueggemann, *The Word Militant: Preaching a Decentering Word* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 136.

Anger, which is "proportional between expectations and reality," began as hurt (disappointment, let down, lonely, irritated, resentful) and turned into anger.¹⁴¹ During conversations with the grieving, they should be encouraged to explore their expectations, which allow them to see "clearer what is going on with them, reduces the heat of their anger, salve their hurt, and bring caring to surface."¹⁴²

An excellent method to help diffuse the anger is to (1) identify the anger and acknowledge it; (2) identify the hurt under the anger and acknowledge it; (3) identify the caring under the hurt and acknowledge it, and (4) help them identify the difference between expectation and reality.

Bargaining. Bargaining begins when the bereaved has changed their mind about their anger. Kubler-Ross indicated bargaining is more like postponing the inevitable and includes a reward for the desired behavior, imposes time constraints, and implied promise (which is not typically kept) that no more would be asked if the postponement is granted.¹⁴³ Kubler-Ross suggested that "psychologically, promises may be associated with quiet guilt," and there are many bargains made with God which are "usually kept a secret or mentioned between the lines or in a chaplain's private office."¹⁴⁴ Bereaved individuals will *secretly* ask God to reverse the death and make promises that they cannot keep. For example: "God, if you raise this child from the dead, I will dedicate my entire

141. James C. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better? Communicating & Connecting in Relationships*. (Pennsauken, NJ: BookBaby, 2007), 170–171.

142. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?* 170–171.

143. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 95.

144. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 95.

life to your service." This beautiful promise should not be conditional on the deceased's return to life because when it does not happen, the bereaved may become discouraged and do not follow through with their hasty promise to serve. When bargaining does not achieve the desired results, bereaved individuals become more aware of the reality of their loss, and discouragement can set in and may lead to depression.

Depression. The depression phase sets in when a person is no longer numb, their anger has subsided, and the bargaining did not work. Bowlby characterized depression as "giving up the searching attempts to recover the deceased ... and a disinclination to look to the future to see any purpose in life."¹⁴⁵ Depression tends to last the longest of all the emotions associated with grief, and depression can be categorized as either preparatory depression or reactive depression.¹⁴⁶ Preparatory depression occurs when a loss is expected to occur. When a child has been ill for a long time, and death is imminent, parents and family members will reluctantly say goodbye to the child. In other words, they will begin to prepare for the impending death of the child emotionally.

Reactive depression occurs after a death has occurred. Guilt and shame will often accompany reactive depression.¹⁴⁷ During this time, it may be necessary for the bereaved to seek professional counseling to move forward. It also may be necessary to be prescribed antidepressant medications, sleeping medications, or even anxiety medications in extreme cases. Often, bereaved parents lose themselves in depression without realizing

145. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, 25.

146. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 98.

147. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 98.

the impact on their family. Emotional depression will often manifest itself physically.¹⁴⁸

A person can be constantly tired, have an achy body, or stop caring about their outward appearance. To move from this place is very difficult and usually cannot be done alone.

In depression, there is a danger of becoming so preoccupied with oneself that one cannot look outside the box to "rethink, reimagine, and re-describe larger reality."¹⁴⁹

Acceptance. The final stage of grief is acceptance. If a bereaved person reaches this stage, then they are ready to move forward with life. Acceptance is the point where many of the psychological experts' recovery models are focused on.

Worden's four tasks of mourning are fifty percent complete at this point. The bereaved individuals have (1) accepted the reality of the death through a funeral or memorial rituals, speaking and thinking about the deceased in the past tense, come to terms with the impact of the death on the bereaved person's life, and acknowledged how the individual died; and (2) worked through the pain of grief where emotions are acknowledged, talked about, and understood. Likewise, the bereaved individual has moved through Rando's first two "Rs" of processing grief: recognize the death, and react emotionally

Worden's third task is for the bereaved to adjust to life without the deceased and includes three areas of adjustment: (a) the *external* adjustments impact how the death affects the survivor's everyday functioning and may require the acquisition of new skills

148. AW Love, "Progress in Understanding Grief, Complicated Grief, and Caring for the Bereaved," *Contemporary Nurse: A Journal for the Australian Nursing Profession* 27, no. 1 (2007): 74.

149. Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 142.

like parenting, financial responsibilities, housing repairs, maintenance, and cleaning; (b) the *internal* adjustment impacts how the death affects one's sense of self including adapting to a new environment of living alone and doing things alone; and (c) the *spiritual* adjustment impacts how the death affects one's beliefs, values, and assumptions about God.¹⁵⁰ The spiritual impact of a loved one's death will be discussed in the section on faith.

Rando's following three tasks of recovery resemble Worden's third task. Rando indicated that it is time to (a) recollect and re-experience where the griever needs to sort through, identify, and store memories; (b) relinquish in which the griever needs to release the attachment to the deceased one, and (c) readjust to everyday living as the griever begins to identify who he or she is—independent of the deceased loved one.¹⁵¹

Kübler-Ross said that the acceptance phase of grief processing "should not be mistaken for a happy stage. It is [or can be] almost void of feelings. It is as if the pain has gone and the struggle is over" and a pause takes place before the final portion of the journey.¹⁵² The pain of the loss will have finally faded, but no particular emotion emerges. During this rest period of grieving, the bereaved may begin to smile again; they may laugh, but it may still sound empty. Memories are everywhere. Kubler-Ross reminds the survivor's support system that the bereaved family would need more help, understanding, and support.¹⁵³ As the survivor moves out of the resting phase, things begin to have new meaning.

150. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, 39–52.

151. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 40–50.

152. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 124.

153. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 124.

In this phase of "reorganization," Bowlby believed that survivors begin to create attachments to new individuals, and former appetites or interests are rekindled.¹⁵⁴ Once a bereaved person has reached the acceptance phase, they will begin to search for a new purpose. Rando's final task is to reinvest his or her life consistent with a reshaped sense of identity.¹⁵⁵ The survivor may reach out to the local church and try to find a way to belong. They may choose to relocate because there are too many memories in that location and desire a fresh start. Only after finally accepting the death can the bereaved truly find what their new everyday life will look like.

Worden's fourth and final task is for the survivor to relocate the deceased and emotionally move on with life. This task seeks to maintain a connection to the deceased while moving forward with life. The bereaved will need to find appropriate and ongoing connections with the deceased, engage with memories, and create memories through new things or new relationships.¹⁵⁶ The fourth task is hindered by holding on to the past attachment rather than forming new ones. Some people find loss so painful that they make a pact never to love again. For many people, Task Four is the most difficult one to accomplish.

Grief and mourning are expressions of pain after the death of a loved one. Even though the wound of grief does not disappear, it does not remain as raw as the initial pain of separation.¹⁵⁷ Although people cannot avoid grief, the effects of grief—experiencing

154. Rando, *Grief, Dying, and Death*, 25.

155. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 40–50.

156. Worden, *Grief Counseling and Grief Therapy*, 39–52.

157. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 5.

physical discomfort, depression, anxiety, and phobias—can be minimized.¹⁵⁸ Until a person who has endured a crisis grieves the loss of what is, what was, and what will never be, healing and wholeness will not be achieved.¹⁵⁹

The message is simple: "Loss is not the enemy; not facing it is."¹⁶⁰ Reluctance to face the reality of death robs the mourner of any chance of life. When people do not process their loss, it becomes a stumbling block, and in order to live healthy, productive lives, "it is important for those who experience [death] to make some sense of their loss."¹⁶¹ Grief is an obligatory pilgrimage that one stumbles through like a nightmare. At first, time passes in a blur of pain and emotions, but new paths are forged as God guides the sufferer's footsteps over time.¹⁶² Grieving is multi-dimensional. As an emotional response, grief is an internal struggle that can present itself in psychological and physiological manifestations.

As bereaved individuals process grief, there is movement from the moment of the incident or death to creating a new normal. Regardless of the model or theory applied, Kanel reminds survivors, families, and support systems that "mourning can be considered finished when the tasks of mourning are over ... Mourning is a long-term process."¹⁶³

158. Wei Wang et al., "A Study of Psychological Crisis Intervention with Family Members of Patients Who Died after Emergency Admission to Hospital," *Social Behavior and Personality* 38, no. 4 (2010): 477.

159. Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 135.

160. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 62.

161. Daugherty, *ApParent*, xvii.

162. Barbara D. Rosof, *The Worst Loss: How Families Heal from the Death of a Child* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 1995), 47.

163. Kanel, *Crisis Intervention*, 139.

Faith Crisis. Despite the apparent trauma and pain experienced, it is essential to remember that grief is not a terrible thing that needs to be avoided. The Old Testament reminds believers, "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die... a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl 3:1-4).

During the grieving process, people will walk through a very dark time, but how they deal with this experience will determine the health of their spirituality, physical body, and mental processing. Even though the only way to process grief is actually to go through it and experience it in its fullness, the "good news is that God travels that road with us."¹⁶⁴

Harold Koenig, a psychiatrist and faculty member at Duke University, has produced research indicating that people who are treated physically, emotionally, mentally, *and* spiritually tend to recover quicker than those who receive treatment in only one or two of those areas.¹⁶⁵ Koenig's holistic treatment model's effectiveness was applied to the quality of life research in oncology patients. It was discovered that addressing spirituality and religious issues was paramount in inpatient treatment plans.¹⁶⁶

164. Tim Clinton, Edward Hindson, and George Ohlschlager, *The Bible for Hope: Caring for People God's Way New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2001), Grief/loss; "Dealing with loss and grief." By H. Norman Wright. Isaiah 59:3,4.

165. Harold Koenig, Dana King, and Verna B. Carson, *Handbook of Religion and Health*, 2nd ed. (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Harold G. Koenig, *Medicine, Religion, and Health: Where Science and Spirituality Meet*, 1st ed.. (West Conshohocken, Pa: Templeton Press, 2008); Harold G. Koenig, *Religion and Mental Health: Research and Clinical Applications*, 1st ed. (Academic Press, 2018); Harold G. Koenig, *Spirituality and Health Research: Methods, Measurements, Statistics, and Resources*, 1st ed. (Templeton Press, 2012); Harold G. Koenig, *Spirituality in Patient Care: Why, How, When, and What*, 3rd ed., Revised and Expanded. (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2013); Harold Koenig and Malcolm McConnell, *The Healing Power of Faith: How Belief and Prayer Can Help You Triumph Over Disease*, Reprint ed. (New York London Toronto Sydney: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

166. Johanna Mytko and Sara Knight, "Body, Mind and Spirit; Towards the Integration of Reolgiosity and Spirituality in Cancer Quality of Life Research," *Psycho-Oncology* 8, no. 5 (1999): 439.

While deep in their spirit, the grieving know that God did not forsake them, their raging, uncontrolled emotions blur all their senses and are left vulnerable to temptations and to question God, to be angry at God, and to shut God out using "expression of fear and hatred of the material world or as attempts to manipulate God."¹⁶⁷ Grieving parents run the risk of turning from the very God that gifted them with the child where they lose sight of the fact that the "Spirit is not only the giver but also the gift, that is, the personal presence of God in the heart of the believer."¹⁶⁸ Out of a grieving heart, it is natural to have questions.¹⁶⁹

During times of grief, those questions are more personal than they are practical or theoretical and "want to know how to handle their suffering and how to relate it to their belief in the goodness, power, and wisdom of God."¹⁷⁰ After his wife died, C. S. Lewis claimed that he was better able to remember his wife when he moved forward in his grief.¹⁷¹ Lewis acknowledged that his desire to continue loving his wife's life and her memory despite "all her resistances, all her faults, all her unexpectedness" was "iconoclastic."¹⁷² Lewis conceded that he must not remain content with "phantasmagoria," or he would have worshipped the memory of his love for her.¹⁷³

167. Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 134.

168. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *The Holy Spirit: A Guide to Christian Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 39.

169. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 17.

170. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 29.

171. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 52.

172. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 77.

173. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 77.

When grieving, people will look for someone to blame or for rescue, leading to a potentially distorted view of God.¹⁷⁴ They tend to say that life is not fair, but "fairness is a human perspective, not a divine one."¹⁷⁵ The question of "Why?" is generally asked; probably because grief not only attacks personally, but it raises the question "of God's part in suffering"¹⁷⁶ From God's perspective, tests or trials enhance a person's faith and is a part of the gift of freedom, it is also "part of the nature and function of the physical world" and shows "creation in process."¹⁷⁷ In the middle of tests and trials of faith, the grieving are forced to "cry from the depths of our heart" and "know that he is present."¹⁷⁸ Christians have the power to know there is victory over suffering and the knowledge that God is "wiser and more powerful," which ought to give the grieving "fresh comfort, consolation and great peace."¹⁷⁹

Bishop Kallistos Ware remarked that it is during this time of crisis and grief that an individual is strongly tempted to "identify his [or her] own limited perspective with universal truth."¹⁸⁰ Christians suffer during their lifetime to grow spiritually but must have the right attitude about it if there are any benefits from it.¹⁸¹ Many people consider the task too daunting of "discovering how one feels about God" in a "serious or meaningful way."¹⁸² Suffering is an "earthbound condition," but with the Spirit's

174. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 31.

175. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 49.

176. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 30.

177. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 34.

178. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 80.

179. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 58.

180. Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Way* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1995), 262.

181. Theodore H Epp, *Why Do Christians Suffer?* (Lincoln: Back to the Bible Broadcast, 1970),

27.

182. Steven B Sample, *The Contrarian's Guide to Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 115.

involvement, "motivated by love and comprehensive wisdom," the concept of suffering can then become a "valuable and integral element" for the believer."¹⁸³

Often, the bereaved pretend that they are progressing on their grief journey when falling apart on the inside. The pretense often stems from the bereaved person's attempt to avoid the cultural shaming or a sense that the audience is uncomfortable around the situation or the intensity of emotions being displayed. The grieving person needs to be guided in the grieving process.¹⁸⁴ Christians might benefit from honestly saying that God is helping them process the feelings of grief and that they struggle daily with the reality of their loss.

Throughout the grieving process, well-meaning Christians often and mistakenly inform the bereaved that God's plan had been fulfilled in the deceased's life and that the bereaved need to look for the positive in this very negative situation. When the church reinforces the "think positive, be in control, take charge of our lives...rise above the hurt, do not admit having been hurt" mentality, people do not know how to, or refuse to, mourn their loss.¹⁸⁵ Maintaining a positive outlook does not mean ignoring the unfavorable circumstances but recognizing the reality of the current situation and finding God in the middle of tragedy. This shift in perspective can be averted, avoided, or even resolved by having someone who is not in crisis come alongside that person to add

183. Keith Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology: A Theology of Encounter* (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 307.

184. Bernice M. Moore and Harry Estill Moore, "The Family, a Reservoir in Crisis," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 15, no. 5 (January 1942): 285.

185. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 85.

strength and faith to the hurting person because "an empty vessel" needs to be filled by the covenant mercies and faithfulness of God in Christ.¹⁸⁶

The grief process is a personal journey, and, as a result, no one can truly understand the depth or breadth of another person's suffering. However, having a compassionate companion who will walk the path with the bereaved could help guide the grieving through their grief journey.

Death of a Child

As previously defined, death is the cessation of life processes with the hope of life after death. Death experiences cause families extreme grief and loss, but experiencing a child's death adds an additional level of suffering that would need to be addressed to guide families through the grieving process successfully.

In 2018, The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported that 21,467 children died before their first birthday. Between the ages of 1 through 14 years old, an additional 9,280 children died. The top causes of death were unintentional injuries, congenital malformations, deformations, chromosomal abnormalities, homicide, cancer, and suicide (10-14-year-olds).¹⁸⁷

Kubler-Ross wrote that child death is one of the most brutal deaths to accept because "it is a rude reminder that death follows no predictable timetable but chooses its

186. *The Modern Theologian's Reader*. ed. David F. Ford and Mike Higton (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 100.

187. Center for Disease Control, "Child Health Fast Stats," Center for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed October 30, 2020, <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/child-health.htm>; Jiaquan Xu, "Mortality in the United States, 2018," no. 355 (2020): 8.

own time and place."¹⁸⁸ Psychologist Shirley Murphy wrote that "the death of a child is more devastating to survivors than the deaths in other kinship relationships."¹⁸⁹ Nancy Ludt adds, "losing a child has a different meaning than losing a parent. When you lose a parent, you lose your past, but when you lose a child, you lose your future."¹⁹⁰ Rando explained the visible and invisible impact that a child's death has on a parent and family.

There is a curious social phenomenon of denying the significance and number of losses inherent in the death of a child at one or the other end of the age spectrum (i.e., when death is a miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, stillbirth, loss in multiple pregnancies, or infant death, or when the death is of an adult child ... often the fact that emotional bonding occurs well in advance of birth is overlooked. Usually, such bonding takes place more quickly for mothers, who can feel the child develop within them, but it transpires for many fathers. Both parents typically bring with them into the situation long-held dreams, hopes, beliefs, expectations, assumptions, feelings, thoughts, and meanings about themselves as the parents they ultimately will be and about the children they ultimately will have.

Also, they begin to invest specifically during the actual pregnancy in the image of the child-to-be, the family that will be created, and their abilities to carry out the parental role. All of these constitute significant secondary losses that must be mourned no matter the child's age. Even in death before birth, parents lose much

When an already-born infant dies, the family typically experience a deep psychological wound, as the little person to whom they were oriented to providing care for is ripped away ... Although the actual life to be mourned may have been short, the needs, feelings, thoughts, behavior and interaction patterns, hopes, wishes, fantasies, dreams, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and meanings associated with the child are enormous, and her [or his] fleeting existence and the memories of it are often excruciatingly painful.¹⁹¹

188. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *Death: The Final Stage of Growth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1975), 97.

189. Shirley A. Murphy, "The Loss of a Child: Sudden Death and Extended Illness Perspectives," in *Handbook of Bereavement Research and Practice: Advances in Theory and Intervention* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2008), 375; Catherine M. Sanders, "A Comparison of Adult Bereavement in the Death of a Spouse, Child, and Parent," *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying* 10, no. 4 (January 1, 1979): 303–320.

190. Nancy Ludt, "Bereaving Parent Support Group," Lecture Notes, California State University Fullerton, 1993.

191. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 612–613.

An Australian and New Zealand study of core bereavement items in bereaved spouses, adult children, and parents discovered that unexpected and accidental deaths caused higher grief scores than expected and natural deaths, which led to the conclusion that "children tended to die unexpectedly by accident with their parents experiencing the most intense bereavement response."¹⁹²

In a study of older adults, Anna Sofia Bratt cited research by Michael Stallings and others, indicating that the loss of a child at an older age is more detrimental to wellbeing than the loss of a spouse. Bratt explained that the death of a child is an unexpected event and not a "normative life event," whereas "the loss of a spouse, even though negative and difficult, is more expected in later life."¹⁹³ Rando explained the connection between a parent and child as:

an extension of the parents ... the child is a product of one's self and one's partner, feelings inherently contain emotion about the self and the other ... feelings about the child can come from the" past (extension of what has been, connection to ancestors), present (to be a source and object of love, serve as proof of worth, status, or competence; provide opportunity for growth and engagement with life), or future (new beginnings, promise of things to come, parental hopes and dreams, parents' continuity and immortality).¹⁹⁴

Murphy's research has shown that three main themes were emerging among bereaved parents. Murphy and her co-authors concluded that "the death of a child is a

192. Middleton et al., "A Longitudinal Study Comparing Bereavement Phenomena in Recently Bereaved Spouses, Adult Children and Parents," *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 32, no. 2 (April 1998): 240.

193. Anna Sofia Bratt, Ulf Stenström, and Mikael Rennemark, "Effects on Life Satisfaction of Older Adults after Child and Spouse Bereavement," *Aging & Mental Health* 21, no. 6 (June 2017): 603; Michael C. Stallings et al., "Relationships among Life Events and Psychological Well-Being: More Evidence for a Two-Factor Theory of Well-Being," *Journal of Applied Gerontology* 16, no. 1 (March 1997): 104–119.

194. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 614.

death of a child, that is, death is irreversible and knowing the cause will not bring the child back ... suicide has the most profound and long-lasting impact upon parents' functioning. Furthermore, the parents' adjustment will differ per how 'adjustment' is defined."¹⁹⁵ Murphy studied bereaved parents who

reported devastating effects of the deaths of their children. Regardless of the cause of death, parents reported that their lives had been changed forever. Parents in all cultures studied commented on the death of a child "being out of order," which is most difficult for them to comprehend because the death of a child violates the parents' beliefs about a just world ... untimely deaths of young people rob parents of the past, present, and especially the future. The parental role ... leaves parents feeling victimized, because much of a parent's identity involves protecting and providing for his or her children and looking forward to the children's future.¹⁹⁶

A 2003 Danish study on parental bereavement revealed a higher risk of premature death in bereaved mothers during the first three years after the child's death; however, bereaved fathers had a lower risk during the same time frame. The difference in death rates was partially attributed to "psychological stress after the death of a child" and how it could affect their health.¹⁹⁷ A 2019 American study on parental mortality revealed that parents who had experienced the death of a child were 32% more likely to die earlier than life expectancy "than their peers who did not have any deceased children, and they were more likely to die of heart disease."¹⁹⁸ Murphy added that "bereaved parents had poorer

195. Shirley Murphy et al., "Bereaved Parents' Outcomes 4 to 60 Months after Their Children's Deaths by Accident, Suicide, or Homicide: A Comparative Study Demonstrating Differences.," *Death studies* 27, no. 1 (2003): 40.

196. Murphy, "The Loss of a Child," 390.

197. Jiong Li et al., "Mortality in Parents after Death of a Child in Denmark: A Nationwide Follow-up Study," *The Lancet* 361, no. 9355 (February 1, 2003): 364.

198. Jieun Song et al., "Mortality in Parents after the Death of a Child," *Social Science & Medicine* 239 (October 1, 2019): 1; "Under-Five Mortality According to Maternal Survival: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," World Health Organization, November 9, 2020, <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/95/4/15-157149/en/>; Li et al., "Mortality in Parents after Death of a Child in Denmark: A Nationwide Follow-up Study"; Unnur A Valdimarsdóttir et al., "The Mother's Risk of Premature Death after Child Loss across Two Centuries," ed. M Dawn Teare, Eduardo Franco, and

mental and physical health ratings."¹⁹⁹ Ludt also revealed that ninety-two percent of bereaved parents become divorced without intervention, but significantly fewer marriages ended when the bereaved parents sought help through a support group.²⁰⁰

To say that everyone will grieve the same way is a massive disservice to the bereaved families. Nothing is clean, clear-cut, or comfortable involved in grief. Grief experiences are as different as the individuals who suffer through it, and attempting to limit the process will become detrimental to the bereaved family. Each person must find a "meaningful way to come to terms with a loss."²⁰¹

Kubler-Ross acknowledged the extent of the pain brought on by a child's death and indicates the journey can

be an impetus to growth for those who accept the challenge. There are two choices when a loved one dies – to live in grief, and guilt covered thinly by façade; or to face those feelings, work through them, and emerge with acceptance of death and a commitment to living.²⁰²

Grief and subsequent recovery are individual responses to the death of a loved one and, while there are "norms" or average timelines indicating an individual "should" recover from grief within twenty-four months, recovery from the death of a child "normally" takes closer to sixty months. Murphy outlined what a bereaved parental timeline looks like:

Susan C Alberts, *eLife* 8 (November 12, 2019): e43476. Statistics on parental mortality appear consistent in developing countries such as Denmark Sweden, Iceland, and The United States. In third-world countries, the statistics are more difficult to ascertain. According to the World Health Organization, maternal mortality rates are higher in poorer countries due to insufficient medical care and proper nutrition.

199. Murphy, "The Loss of a Child," 377.

200. Ludt, "Support Group."

201. "Beyond the Five Stages of Grief. The Bereavement Process Is Seldom Linear and Varies from One Person to the Next.," *The Harvard mental health letter / from Harvard Medical School* 28, no. 6 (2011): 3.

202. Kubler-Ross, *Death*, 97.

At the fourth month post-loss, parents' highest priority concerns were a profound sense of loss ("I miss her/him"), triggers (i.e., seeing the school bus, seeing their deceased children's friends), self-blame and guilt, dissatisfaction with investigations of the deaths, concerns about other children in the family, physical health concerns (i.e., having no energy), and the inability to sleep and eat.

At twelve months post-loss, "I miss her/him" was the most frequently listed challenge, followed by questions and concerns about the death itself (What happened, and why?), about loss of the future (i.e., who will care for me when I am old?"; "I will not have any grandchildren."), about what to do with the child's possessions, and about staying connected with the deceased child (e.g., "What if I forget how his voice sounded?").

At 24- and 60-months post-loss, missing the child, staying connected, and anguish over the deaths remained parents' primary concern.²⁰³

Therese Rando's six "Rs" of mourning were introduced and discussed in the discussion on processing and grief. Rando's book, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, contains a chapter on the death of a child in which she describes how her mourning processes can be applied to parental bereavement:²⁰⁴

1. Recognizing the loss is a challenge
 - a. violates primary function and defies the laws of nature
 - b. multiply victimizes them and savagely assaults their sense of self and their abilities
 - c. continuing in a parental role makes it easier to deny the child's death
 - d. the social negation of the loss often exists
 - e. no dramatic absence is apparent to signal the loss and confirm the reality (death of young infants and adult children residing outside the home)
2. Reacting to the separation
 - a. Intensified pain of a longer duration
 - b. Interferences often exist with the ability to identify, differentiate, and express psychological reactions to the loss
 - c. More secondary losses take place
 - d. Pain is subverted by lack of social support, the loss of the spouse as the most therapeutic resource, and inappropriate social expectations.

203. Murphy, "The Loss of a Child," 381.

204. Rando, *Treatment of Complicated Mourning*, 625–628. Rando's content has been edited based on the length of explanations.

3. Recollecting and re-experiencing the deceased and the relationship
 - a. Little to nothing concrete to review or remember if the child was unborn or infant
 - b. Negative feelings are not socially accepted in parents
4. Relinquishing the old attachment to the deceased and the old assumptive world
 - a. Attachments to the child include attachments to self, making it difficult to distinguish what belongs to the child and the parent and detach from the child. Also, problems occur in relinquishing some aspects of self in the child while retaining others in surviving children.
 - b. The parent-child relationship is less amenable to any other relinquishment of attachment
 - c. At the loss of a pregnancy, infant, or adult child living outside the home, no dramatic signals of death occur.
5. Readjust to move adaptively into the new world without forgetting the old
 - a. The number and severity of violations of the assumptive world often leave bereaved stunned, incredulous, and with a mutilated identity
 - b. Developing a new relationship with the deceased may be difficult because the parental relationship demands role behaviors that are not as amenable to a healthy transition on an intrapsychic plane as other relationships.
 - c. Maintaining a connection to the deceased child may interfere with appropriate adult functioning and incongruous with other roles
 - d. Consequences of social disenfranchisement
 - e. When other children are present in the home, moving adaptively into a new world is problematic because so much of it is the same as the old.
6. Reinvesting
 - a. Similar relationships are more feasible with a spouse, peer, or parent.
 - b. Parents may have a lack of support for having subsequent children.

Rando's mourning processes are challenging to complete alone for someone who suffers from "normal" grief. With the additional trauma of a child's death, companionship and understanding offered through support groups become increasingly necessary. Ludt suggested that support groups are a vital avenue to facilitate grief recovery regardless of

the length of time elapsed since the death. Ludt indicated support groups function to offer participants a place to feel comfortable enough to share their deepest feelings.²⁰⁵

1. a safe place to verbalize feelings. ("I'd trade my living son for my lost son.")
2. space where people, who may or may not actually attend, to know that others understand their feelings. ("Feelings change over the years, and although we don't need to come now, who knows when we will need to come?")
3. space where a deceased child can be discussed at great length ("We can talk about our child all night without any inhibitions. Often talking about memories hurts family members too much, but in the group, our child is alive for 2 hours.")
4. a place to process emotions surrounding the death ("If we say he's dead enough times, we begin to believe it.")
5. The hope for socialization in the future. ("We often feel guilty when we have fun, but we learn here that we can have fun.")
6. limitless time frame. ("He's dead forever, so it will hurt forever.")
7. Parents are allowed to laugh or cry and not hurt anyone's feelings.
8. Parents are free to express their thoughts with no need to explain them.
9. It can save a parent's life. ("Suicidal thoughts are strong, and the group gives some hope and help.")
10. a space where "I know that you know that I know that you know."

Grief, loss, and suffering are elements of life that are naturally occurring.

Psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors, and pastors are often tasked with guiding bereaved individuals through the path of grief. Multiple theories have been developed intended to provide progression markers as people process their grief. Some recovery process portions appear to be self-reliant activities, whereas other tasks require external support to reconcile emotions and thoughts with circumstances. Support systems may play a crucial role in a survivor's ability to recover and reengage in the community.

Support systems may include family, friends, support groups, religious meetings, or various church-related groups. Resilience is important. People need to collect

205. Ludt, "Support Group"; Kanel, *Crisis Intervention*, 144. Kanel included Ludt's presentation in her book; however, Ludt's content has been edited based on the length of explanations.

themselves, so they can have the strength necessary to deal with their crisis. Bereaved individuals receive considerable benefits from talking to someone who has been through similar situations and has come out on the other side of it more robust.²⁰⁶

Hope in Contemporary Literature

Compassionate, caring, and honest guidance will help the sufferer regain some semblance of a life after a loved one's death. Although harsh and unkind words are not the best way to bring a breakthrough in a person's life, honest and direct questions will create the need to dig deep for answers.

H. Norman Wright has suggested that bereaved people will experience some deep-seated heart cries as they journey the path of their grief.

First, there is a cry of pain that can bring you to your knees ("I hurt"). The pain of grief can feel overwhelming. Denial serves as an emotional anesthesia and a defense mechanism so that you will not be totally overwhelmed by the loss. Grief moves through several levels of denial. Each stage painfully brings home the reality of the loss a bit deeper. In that first stage is accepting it in our heads; then in our feelings; and finally, we adjust life's pattern to reflect the reality of what has occurred. There is a price to pay for prolonged denial. We can become emotionally damaged. Second, there is a cry of longing—this comes from the sense of emptiness and loneliness that exists because of the loss of a loved one. A third cry is for supportive love. One of the worst experiences is to feel that you are alone, isolated in a world full of people. [The fourth cry]—the hardest lesson of all—is to accept what one cannot understand and still say that you will stand on your faith and trust in God. This is a cry to accept what has happened, but often the desire to comprehend is overwhelmed. Often one's relationship with God becomes disrupted for a while.²⁰⁷

206. Howard W. Stone et al., "A Study of Church Members During Times of Crisis," *Pastoral Psychology* 52, no. 5 (May 2004): 419.

207. H. Norman Wright, *Missing the Child You Love: Finding Hope in the Midst of Death, Disability or Absence* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 2014), 12–13.

According to Wright's insights, the pain of grief is felt when a person's life journey grinds to a halt. A bereaved individual experiences denial, which serves as a safety zone; however, remaining in the safe zone can be detrimental to one's health. Survivors may need increased support to assist them with their grief processing. The need for support can create avenues for new friendships, companionships, and activities. The supportive love that comes from intentional friendships may keep bereaved individuals engaged with their surroundings. Wright's final cry originates in one's spirit, where the choice trust God needs to be made to. A person's spiritual needs may not be addressed without Christian friends who provide intercessory prayer, exhortation, and wholesome fellowship who will accompany the survivor on the journey over the mountain of grief.

In his book *Good Grief*, Granger Westberg argued that a series of needs are birthed in the sufferer: the need to keep the memories alive, the need for loving concern, the need to share and not burden others with the heavy weight of grief, and the need for a demonstration of sincere interest in sharing the burden of grief.²⁰⁸ Without a sound support system in place, the potential of creating a whole new set of crises exists, possibly causing a bereaved family to fall apart when they need each other the most.²⁰⁹

Jennifer Goetz, Dacher Keltner, and Emiliana Simon-Thomas collaborated to research emotional and cultural psychology. They defined compassion as "the feeling that arises in witnessing another's suffering that motivates a subsequent desire to help" and as a "distinctive and complex affective state associated with specific situational appraisals,

208. Westberg, *Good Grief*, 56.

209. Stroebe et al., "Bereavement Research: Contemporary Perspectives," 21.

nonverbal displays, subjective experience, and autonomic physiology."²¹⁰ Robert Roeser and Jacquelynne Eccles, social-emotional researchers and professors of care and compassion, surmised that Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas believed compassion "evolved to serve three evolutionary functions, including (a) the enhancement caring for vulnerable offspring, (b) facilitation of selecting a good mating partner given this is a desirable attribute, and (c) the facilitation of cooperation between non-related individuals."²¹¹

Roeser and Eccles concluded that compassion is "a multifaceted, complex construct that both have intrinsic roots in mammalian evolution, and ... appear to include perceptual and social-cognitive processes, empathy, and emotion regulation in the face of others' distress, and prosocial motives, intentions, and actions."²¹² Loving compassion was defined utilizing the caregiving characteristics of personal attitudes, thought processes, emotional investment, and growth-promoting efforts through sacrificial concern and giving of oneself for others' wellbeing.²¹³

Authentic compassion meets people where they are, takes them where they want to go, and knows how to help them travel their journey."²¹⁴ James Poling indicated that compassion is a "communal spiritual practice," which includes unconditional acceptance,

210. Jennifer Goetz, Dacher Keltner, and Emiliana Simon-Thomas, "Compassion: An Evolutionary Analysis and Empirical Review," *Psychological Bulletin* 136, no. 3 (May 2010): 352.

211. Robert Roeser and Jacquelynne Eccles, "Mindfulness and Compassion in Human Development: Introduction to the Special Section," *Developmental psychology* 51 (January 1, 2015): 3.

212. Roeser and Eccles, "Mindfulness and Compassion in Human Development, 3.

213. Jonas G. Miller et al., "Compassionate Love Buffers Stress-Reactive Mothers from Fight-or-Flight Parenting," *Developmental Psychology* 51, no. 1 (2015): 36.

214. Marjorie Lloyd and Alex Carson, "Making Compassion Count: Equal Recognition and Authentic Involvement in Mental Health Care," *International Journal of Consumer Studies* 35, no. 6 (November 2011), 616.

endurance, and courage.²¹⁵ Larry Graham expounded on Poling's definition to show that (1) unconditional acceptance permits space for the sufferer to reclaim life; (2) endurance consists of the ability to persist, follow-through, and take action as necessary to explore the new dimensions of life; and (3) courage is necessary to face the adversity which will invariably arise.²¹⁶

To experience actual resolution within their crises, bereaved individuals would need to be willing to "let go of patterns and habits that create unfulfilled needs," accept temporary help and be open to God's grace and mercy, love, and acceptance.²¹⁷

Coping with Grief

As people encounter crises, they develop methods of coping. With recurrent crises, they employ strategies to manage reactions and the environment. When these systems fail, people may experience "temporary psychological distress," which could last up to six weeks.²¹⁸ Suppose a person's short-term coping mechanisms do not restore balance in his or her life. In that case, that person may experience psychological trauma, have thoughts of suicide, or have a psychological breakdown.²¹⁹ During times of crisis, a person may be overwhelmed with emotions and look for ways to ease the pain, including

215. James Poling, *Render unto God: Economic Vulnerability, Family Violence, and Pastoral Theology* (St Louis: Chalice Press, 2002), 234–236.

216. Larry Kent Graham, "Pastoral Theology and Catastrophic Disaster," *Journal of Pastoral Theology* 16, no. 2 (September 2006): 12.

217. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 65.

218. Wei Wang et al., "A Study of Psychological Crisis Intervention," 470.

219. Wang et al., "A Study of Psychological Crisis Intervention," 470.

being open to others' support, potential embarrassment, and taking unnecessary or dangerous risks.²²⁰

As a part of their coping strategies, people often attempt to avoid confronting the issues that stem from or are the cause of the crisis, and they may escape into the dark world of drugs, pornography, sexual addiction, gambling, wasteful spending, sports fanaticism, rampant violence, and even suicide.²²¹ During a crisis, people's additional responses could include perception failure, tension, anxiety, fear, depression, anger, regressive behaviors (thumb-sucking or bedwetting), substance dependence and abuse, feelings of helplessness, hostility, and fixation. Prolonged crises could potentially lead to changes in the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems.²²²

Part of suffering is the ability to heal. Healing can start through making the final arrangements for the deceased. Family and friends can experience comfort, and closure can be experienced as a loved one is honored through selecting music, photographs, poetry, speakers, location, flowers, casket, or urn; preparing the obituary; and designing a printed program.²²³

When a loss occurs, one's reality shifts from the comfort of the known to the unknown's discomfort. From this point on, one can no longer identify with their old lifestyle and self-image but will need to come to terms with the permanence of the loss and reconcile oneself to a forced, new normal. The absence of a person, place, or thing in

220. Stone et al., "Church Members," 415.

221. Timothy Clinton and George Ohlschlager, eds., *Competent Christian Counseling: Foundations and Practice of Compassionate Soul Care* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook, 2002), 13.

222. Wang et al., "A Study of Psychological Crisis Intervention," 470.

223. Roberts, *Death Without Denial*, 69.

one's life creates a gap that must be filled, and "new responsibilities are required" of the survivor.²²⁴

Grief and mourning are expressions of pain after the death of a loved one. Even though the scar of grief does not disappear, the wound does not remain as raw as the initial pain of separation.²²⁵ Although people cannot avoid grief, the effects of grief—experiencing physical discomfort, depression, anxiety, and phobias—can be minimized.²²⁶ Many people hold on to the wound and claim to be in the grieving process but do not process through their grief. Some people settle for focusing only on the "what is," the "what was," and the "what will never be." Worden's fourth task of grieving demands an additional focus that cannot be ignored: Hope. Until a person who has endured a crisis grieves the loss of what is, what was, and what will never be, healing and wholeness will not be achieved.²²⁷

The message is simple: "Loss is not the enemy; not facing it is."²²⁸ Reluctance to face the reality of death robs the mourner of any chance of life. When people do not process their loss, it becomes a stumbling block, and in order to live healthy, productive lives, "it is important for those who experience [death] to make some sense of their loss."²²⁹ Grief is an obligatory pilgrimage that one stumbles through like a nightmare. At first, time passes in a blur of pain and emotions, but new paths are forged as God guides

224. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 37.

225. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*, 5.

226. Wang et al., "A Study of Psychological Crisis Intervention," 477.

227. Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 135.

228. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 62.

229. Daugherty, *ApParent*, xvii.

the sufferer's footsteps over time.²³⁰ God assures His children that they will see their loved ones again even if there is no earthly feeling of accepting death.

If people suffering through a crisis do not feel love and acceptance, they may feel depressed and lack energy, a zest for life, a desire to be social, and fulfillment.²³¹ When people have a history of low self-esteem or feel worthless, they are more susceptible to developing addictions.²³² Combatting addictions will require people to change their coping strategies that exacerbate their unfulfilled needs. People need to be willing (1) to open themselves up to receive love, acceptance, and friendliness and (2) to participate in "need-fulfilling patterns" that will restore wholeness, foster meaningful relationships, and bring a new passion for living.²³³ Grieving people need to be reminded that "God is personal, holy, loving, longsuffering, dynamic, and relational."²³⁴ They should be pointed to God and not worldly pleasures to fill the gaps in their life. Gradually, the crisis will subside, and a sense of peace will emerge, but when the feelings resurface, the people will be better equipped to deal with the emotions and not revert to negative coping strategies.²³⁵

When talking does not bring resolution, some people may turn to prescription medications to alleviate depression, anxiety, and other related feelings. Many people will go to a counselor because they need someone to talk to as they deal with suffering or

230. Rosof, *The Worst Loss*, 47.

231. Tim Clinton and Ron Hawkins, *The Quick-Reference Guide to Biblical Counseling* (Ada, Michigan: Baker Books, 2009), 158.

232. Wright, *The Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 19.

233. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 65.

234. Kenneth J. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited: Towards a Pentecostal Theology of Worship and Witness* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 84.

235. Wang et al., "A Study of Psychological Crisis Intervention," 472.

grief. Counselors are skilled at encouraging people to speak freely about their grief and reach workable solutions, but they may be limited by their lack of experience in these areas.

A New Normal for the Grieving

For the grieving person, living with a new normal means no longer having the presence of the person lost, as well as no longer creating new memories with that person. However, living with a new normal also means learning to live with the loss.²³⁶ In remembering that life is an ongoing process, people need to accept the change and not pretend that life will be the same as it was before the loss. The ongoing effects of the loss that occur in the form of material, relational, functional, health, systematic, and intrapsychic aspects will need to be addressed when they are recognized.²³⁷ The "process" of grieving has not ended, but rather that the irreversibility of loss is accepted, and moving forward in life is necessary. Grief becomes recognizable, and the emotions can be processed; however, "grief can come and go in the life of an individual."²³⁸ Every time a special occasion arrives, grief can be triggered. As people journey through their grief, they must learn to celebrate their loved one's enjoyment of each occasion and not allow difficult emotions to interfere with deceased loved ones' memory.

In general, people should not become frustrated with one who is suffering or grieving and tell them to "get over it" or use other phrases that imply frustration.²³⁹ Such

236. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 38.

237. Daugherty, *ApParent*, xii.

238. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 45.

239. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 38.

well-meaning but unhelpful phrases can cause as much pain as the death of the loved one. Instead, genuinely comforting phrases and actions can be learned and utilized to support the bereaved. Grieving people may "feel the loss of wholeness" or feel they need time and space to adjust to the gap in their life.²⁴⁰ Fellowship with friends and other Christians can assist in lessening the emptiness that is created. A way to help grieving individuals is to provide positive, encouraging interaction.

Additionally, though doing so may be foreign or uncomfortable to the consoler, the sacrifice of self is appreciated by the one in need.²⁴¹ External resources, including demonstrations of commitment, care, and acceptance, enable people to draw on inner resources to regain balance spiritually and emotionally.²⁴² Some studies have indicated that grieving people who have some degree of religious belief recover from their bereavement sooner than those without faith.²⁴³

Religion and Healing

Thema Bryant-Davis and Eunice Wong studied the correlation between spirituality and religion with coping during traumatic events. These authors indicated a small percentage of mental health professionals who address the importance of spiritual or religious activities or involvement when recovering from a traumatic life event.²⁴⁴ A

240. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 49.

241. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 53.

242. Stone et al., "Church Members," 413.

243. Kiri Walsh et al. "Spiritual Beliefs May Affect Outcome of Bereavement: Prospective Study," *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 324, no. 7353 (June 29, 2002): 1551.

244. Thema Bryant-Davis and Eunice C. Wong, "Faith to Move Mountains: Religious Coping, Spirituality, and Interpersonal Trauma Recovery," *American Psychologist* 68, no. 8 (November 2013): 681; Kenneth I. Pargament et al. "Patterns of Positive and Negative Religious Coping with Major Life Stressors," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 37, no. 4 (December 1998): 714. This study

faith community may have more of an impact on suffering people's lives because they have similar beliefs and spiritual expectations.²⁴⁵

Jennifer Wortmann and Crystal Park conducted a review of seventy-three empirical articles highlighting the correlation between religion, spirituality, and bereavement. They indicated that religion has an extraordinary impact on the health and wellbeing of grievers.²⁴⁶ They also indicated that positive religious coping, intrinsic religiousness, and church attendance were directly related to more excellent overall health.²⁴⁷ Christian sufferers will be able to grow their faith during their struggles because "faith is the footbridge that you don't know will hold you up over the chasm until you're forced to walk onto it."²⁴⁸

Wortmann and Park summarized a study of bereaved parents, which indicated that religious affiliations were indirectly related to coping with their child(ren)'s death and had negatively impacted the ability to find meaning in the death.²⁴⁹ Wortmann and Park also stated that being involved with regular religious and spiritual activities positively impacts grieving.²⁵⁰ With the influence religion has on grief, churches should create, maintain, or elevate their ministry to grievers. Although there may be prohibitive factors, churches may need to collaborate with other churches and affiliations to be more

described bereavement and religious coping in five categories: religious participation, religious importance, perceived social support, cognitive processing of the loss, and finding meaning in the death.

245. Bryant-Davis and Wong, "Faith to Move Mountains," 681.

246. Jennifer H. Wortmann and Crystal L. Park, "Religion and Spirituality in Adjustment Following Bereavement: An Integrative Review," *Death Studies* 32, no. 8 (September 1, 2008): 705. The aspects of religion included, but were not limited to affiliation, attendance, general religiousness, beliefs, intrinsic/extrinsic motivations, coping, social support, and spiritual experiences.

247. Wortmann and Park, "Religion and Spirituality," 706.

248. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*, 76.

249. Wortmann and Park, "Religion and Spirituality," 721.

250. Wortmann and Park, "Religion and Spirituality," 723.

effective in their grief ministry. Consolers may need to be educated and trained to effectively create a positive and encouraging atmosphere where the bereaved can feel safe enough to move through their grief.

Beyond meeting the physical needs within a community, the church should be a hospital where spiritual and emotional healing is facilitated, a school where education and discipleship provide encouragement and strengthening for a family during a time of crisis, and a place of community that promotes the kingdom of God.²⁵¹ The church needs to approach suffering people with an inordinate amount of compassion and grace in order to affect change in the lives of the bereaved. Andrew J Weaver, Laura T Flannelly, and John Preston, pastoral psychologists, called clergypersons anchors of hope for bereaved individuals. Weaver et al. admonished pastors to provide realistic, honest nurturing and helpful support as they help guide the survivors of grief through this painful time.²⁵² When a faith community provides authentic compassion for those who are mourning, they become the recipients of the mourner's "everlasting gratitude."²⁵³

When groups that work with grieving individuals express commitment, caring, and acceptance, the sense of family relationships is reinforced.²⁵⁴ These groups can help bridge the gap between other people and the people who are suffering and feeling alienated because of their situation.²⁵⁵ To be effective in ministry, one must be willing to

251. Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 63.

252. Andrew J. Weaver, Laura T. Flannelly, and John Preston, *Counseling Survivors of Traumatic Events: A Handbook for Pastors and Other Helping Professionals* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Pr, 2003), 84.

253. Westberg, *Good Grief*, 33.

254. Leo F. Hawkins, "Urbanization, Families, and the Church," *Family Coordinator* 18, no. 1 (January 1969): 50.

255. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 76.

work with those who have endured crises and are suffering.²⁵⁶ It is a "deliberate plunge" into others' suffering needed to help them move forward in the grieving process.²⁵⁷

Charles Stanley summarizes the spiritual aspect of suffering in this way:

The unbelieving world doesn't understand our spiritual life because the world lives by its senses and appetites. All of us—believers and nonbelievers alike—have appetites: We have a need for love, a desire to grow, a longing to learn. We have an appetite for independence. So long as a person is without a relationship to God, these appetites degenerate into what the Bible call "lusts" of the flesh. But the Holy Spirit puts all of the appetites, desires, and impulses of our flesh and souls under the command of our spirits.²⁵⁸

Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, people are called by God and, as such, ought to be considered ministers.²⁵⁹ These ministers within the church gather to edify one another in faith, hope, and love to become people who can worship in "spirit and truth anywhere and anytime."²⁶⁰

Conclusion

Through cultivating and celebrating the discipline of hope, comforters must be cautioned to keep facts separate from the emotions caused by suffering so that a person's sorrow is not deepened.²⁶¹ Dr. Wright admonished griever to give themselves "permission to grieve and permission to stop grieving" as they move through the journey

256. Floyd, *Crisis Counseling*, 63.

257. Eugene H. Peterson, *Five Smooth Stones for Pastoral Work*, Reprint edition. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing, 1980), 114.

258. Charles Stanley, *Finding God's Blessings in Brokenness: How Pain Reveals His Deepest Love* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2017), 54–55.

259. Steven Fettke, *God's Empowered People: A Pentecostal Theology of the Laity*, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock Pub, 2011), 10.

260. Kevin J. Vanhoozer and Owen Strachan, *The Pastor as Public Theologian: Reclaiming a Lost Vision* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2015), 168.

261. Douglas Groothuis, *Walking Through Twilight: A Wife's Illness--A Philosopher's Lament* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Books, 2017), 53.

of saying goodbye to their loved one to saying hello to new experiences and people. During this journey, forgiveness is essential. The bereaved should forgive the loved one for leaving and forgive anyone who may have been connected to that person's death. Additionally, given that "when we release the person, we too are released," the bereaved should forgive themselves for being powerless to prevent their loved one's death.²⁶² When people are released from the burden of sin, they can stand taller, hold their head up confidently, and declare their freedom was found in Christ. Imagine what it could be like for sufferers to be released from the drowning burden of their grief and walk taller and more confidently.

262. Wright, *When the Past Won't Let You Go*, 115.

CHAPTER THREE: THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL DIMENSIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore suffering, grief, hope, and comfort from a biblical and theological perspective. This section will include four parts: biblical examples of suffering, biblical examples of hope, theology of suffering and grief, and theology of hope and comfort. This work will interact with the canonical Scriptures relating to the theological foundation of suffering, grief, hope, and comfort.

A significant percentage of people approach ministers regarding their suffering, which was caused in part, or whole, by misconceived perceptions of God.²⁶³ The unanswered “Why?” questions may contribute to this misconception, and not addressing the questions can leave the bereaved individuals feeling even more confused or spiritually distant than before the tragedy. Fretheim indicated that when the link between God and suffering is connected incorrectly or incompletely, religious communities "have had a remarkable capacity to turn people away from [their] faith."²⁶⁴

God spoke through the prophet Isaiah to the children of Israel and said:

I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create calamity; I, the Lord, do all these things. Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the Lord, have created it (Isa 45:7-8).

263. Michael Cavanagh, “The Perception of God in Pastoral Counseling,” *Pastoral Psychology* 41, no. 9 (1992): 75–80.

264. Terence E. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed: The Bible, God, and Natural Disasters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 96.

God's plan for His creation is not to delete loss, suffering, trauma, and grief but to channel the tragedies to accomplish His purposes. Rev 21:4 indicates that tears shed by humanity will be wiped away by God.²⁶⁵

In order to provide context, support, and challenges for the theology of grief and suffering and the theology of hope and comfort, this work will utilize a variety of translations of the Holy Scriptures. This chapter will engage with theologians such as Terrance Fretheim, Abraham van de Beek, D. A. Carson, Douglas John Hall, Walter Bruggemann, Kallistos Ware, Ray Anderson, and Clark Pinnock.

Lending credence to this conversation will also be scholars George Buttrick and Paul Billheimer, the founder of Back to the Bible; Theodore Epp, executive director of Caring Cancer Ministry; Randy Becton, and pastoral consultant Michael E. Cavanagh.²⁶⁶

Many times, as illustrated by Nicholas Wolterstorff, it is not enough to tell suffering people how much God loves them but must show them through personalized actions. Suffering people need others to come alongside them to provide words of encouragement and affirmation and help them look for a sliver of light in their darkness. Without comfort, grieving individuals may find it challenging to move forward from the depth of their grief and hopelessness into a world of hope, community, and renewed purpose.

265. David Schnasa Jacobsen, "Preaching as the Unfinished Task of Theology: Grief, Trauma, and Early Christian Texts in Homiletical Interpretation," *Theology Today* 70, no. 4 (January 2014): 413.

266. "Back to The Bible," Bttb, <https://www.backtothebible.org/>; Randy Becton and Gary McCaleb, "Interview with Randy Becton, 1986," published 1986, video, 28:20 <https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph779573/>.

Suffering impacts the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of one's life.²⁶⁷ Fretheim explained that "humanity's limitations in intelligence, agility, speed, and strength lead to various sufferings."²⁶⁸ However, the reality for humanity is life as God has created it (apart from sin) and can serve God's purposes for the fullest life possible "and the process of procreation includes an element of pain intensified with the introduction of sin."²⁶⁹ Van de Beek believed that humanity's capacity to experience pain is "a gift and part of God's good creation (think of getting one's hand too close to a fire)."²⁷⁰ People may disagree that pain is a gift from God; however, as Joseph said to his brothers, God will use harmful words and actions to bring about something good (Gen 50:20). Words or actions may inflict emotional or physical pain on another person because evil intends to steal, kill, and destroy the believer (John 10:10). When in pain, people often experience some form of weakness. Jesus said his "power works best in weakness," which leads Paul to rejoice in his weakness so Christ can work through him. (2 Cor 12:19).

The Bible is God's Word to humanity. Contained within the pages are multiple characters who encountered suffering and grief, yet those who believe in God found hope and comfort in him and were dependent on him for their survival. Adam and Eve were responsible for humanity's innate penchant to sin. As a result of their sin, their descendants were cursed to suffer through hard work and increased childbirth pains. Hagar suffered many years of abuse from Sarah and Abraham but held on to God's

267. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 106.

268. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 107.

269. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 107.

270. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 108.

promised that her child would be the father of many people one day. God comforted her in her anguish. Joseph grew up being shown extraordinary favor by his father, who created friction among his brothers. Joseph remained faithful to God throughout the trials that resulted from his brothers' actions, and God rewarded Joseph's faithfulness.

God spoke through Moses and challenged the Israelites to choose life or death, blessings or curses, saying, "oh, that you would choose life so that you and your descendants might live" (Deut 30:19, NLT). Through a series of events, Job lost his wealth and descendants. His wife encouraged him to curse God, and his friends asked him what sin he committed to be receiving such punishment. Although Hannah received greater love from her husband than he showered on his other wife, she suffered from barrenness. Hannah's inability to conceive a child left her vulnerable to being mocked by the other wife, the mother of Elkanah's children. Hannah cried out to God in desperation; God was filled with compassion for her and answered her pleas for a child.

David said he was walking through the valley of the shadow of death (Ps 23:4a). David said he was going *through* the valley—not residing in the valley, and though he was suffering, he was in the *shadow of death* but not dying. First, David indicated that he was suffering but then expressed that his hope and comfort came from knowing that God was with him, walking next to him, and protecting him. David pleaded that God would see that he was suffering and bless him despite the curses against him (2 Sam 16:12). David mourned before the child died but not after because he held the deep conviction "that he

will have a personal reunion with his son: 'I will go to him.'"²⁷¹ David had hope in God's promise that he would see his son again.

Rizpah, who suffered due to her culture's norms, sat in a field to care for her children's bodies after they had been killed by those who sought revenge on Saul. Rizpah's diligence was noticed by David, who was moved with compassion and ordered Saul's and his sons' bodies to be retrieved and buried in the Kish family tomb (2 Sam 21:14).

Habakkuk cried out to God on behalf of the people of Israel and was bold enough to ask God the tough questions: why was this happening to them?; how long would they have to suffer?; and why did God choose such violent people to bring judgment on Israel? Even while questioning God's methods, Habakkuk recognized God's sovereignty and followed His plan for redemption.

Habakkuk addressed a critical topic, to which Terrance Fretheim, a leading Old Testament scholar, offered six reasons for answering the "Why?" questions:²⁷²

- a) To know the sources of suffering and to develop healing responses may effect real change on behalf of many present and future sufferers.
- b) We often do not realize the extent to which our own words and actions have caused the suffering, including the often-hidden suffering of the poor and underprivileged.
- c) Drawing on the community setting and utilizing the wisdom and counsel of others could help people move away from a fear of what others may think ("what sin was committed that led to such suffering?") or fear of "the worst."
- d) Dismissal or diminishment of the Why? questions create the opportunity for them to fester and eventually impact individuals or communities in harmful or even deadly ways.

271. D. A. Carson, et al., eds., *Biblical Theology Study Bible: Follow God's Redemptive Plan as It Unfolds throughout Scripture - New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 511, note on 2 Sam 12:21-23.

272. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 101–103.

- e) Asking the follow-up question of what one will do about personal suffering or others' suffering may create a helpful future vision.
- f) Bring the Why questions to God just as David, Jeremiah, and Jesus did (Ps 22:1; Matt 27:46; Ps 44:24; Jer 15:18; Lam 5:20).

Jesus, whom his people rejected, suffered for all humanity and told his disciples that they would grieve. However, having found peace in a relationship with Jesus, the disciples would find a joy that would never leave them.

I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn over what is going to happen to me, but the world will rejoice. You will grieve, but your grief will suddenly turn to wonderful joy ... so you have sorrow now, but I will see you again; then you will rejoice, and no one can rob you of that joy ... I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth, you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world (John 16:20, 22, 33, NLT).

Jesus admonished his followers to keep holding on to their faith, which brings comfort and hope. Before ascending to heaven, Jesus promised to send the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who would fill believers with power (Luke 24:49). God promises to be present and to display His power in a person's greatest weakness.²⁷³

After his divine encounter with the Lord, Paul's zealotry for God resulted in many years of suffering imprisonment, abuse, and various other calamities. James, the half-brother of Jesus, said, "God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him" (Jas 1:12, NLT).

God received glory through believers' faithfulness, integrity, and character. When suffering people seek to deepen their relationship with God in the middle of their

273. Warrington, *Pentecostal Theology*, 306.

suffering, God provides them with comfort, peace, and hope.²⁷⁴ God wants more than a quick, public response to suffering; He requests a more "intimate, personal, and permanent response" that comes from "an inner conversion."²⁷⁵ Christians endure suffering because they know it is only temporary, and God is their strength, peace, and joy.

Just as there are a variety of causes to suffering, so there are a variety of responses to suffering. Job's initial response to suffering is submission. After losing his children, his wealth (Job 1:13-19), and his health (Job 2:7-8), he responds with worship. He acknowledges God's sovereignty (Job 1:20-21), refuses to curse God, and is willing to accept both good and calamity from God (Job 2:9-10).²⁷⁶

The sufferings of modern Christians are not much different from the sufferings of believers in biblical times. Believers at all points in history have faced health problems, death, and persecution. In times of suffering, the believer's response is just as critical as enduring the trial. Christians should respond by acknowledging God's sovereignty, being willing to accept good and calamity, and worshipping freely. The Bible is full of examples of worship arising from suffering.

Adam and Eve: Disobedience Resulting in Suffering and the Promise of Redemption

God formed Adam from the earth's dust, and a rib from Adam was the foundation for Eve's formation. Their life was glorious. They walked and talked with God. They had paradise for their home, but they lost it because their faith in God wavered when Satan tempted them to question the severity of God's warning. God had warned Adam and Eve

274. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 778–780.

275. Carson et al., *NIV, Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 1546, note on Joel 2:13.

276. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 777.

not to eat from the Tree of Life, or they would die (Gen 2:16-17, NKJV). The Tree of Life was essential to perpetuate life.²⁷⁷ Without direct access to God and the tree of life, death became a certainty for Adam and Eve.²⁷⁸ When they ate the forbidden fruit, Adam and Eve's physical bodies did not immediately die, but their relationship with God was forever changed.²⁷⁹ Once they had eaten the fruit, Adam and Eve became aware of their nakedness (Gen 3:7). Their spiritual eyes perceived new knowledge, their innocence was abandoned, and feelings of shame came upon them.²⁸⁰

Although they had a very intimate relationship with God Himself, they began to think it was not enough for them. The serpent challenged Eve to view God as a fiend rather than a friend. She declared her autonomy apart from God.²⁸¹ Eve embraced the seeds of doubt planted, and her intentional actions had the unintentional result of humanity being under the curse of sin (Gen 3:6-10, 16-19).

Gen 3:19 records God telling Adam that he will return to the ground's dust (indicating that death *will* come to Adam). This death was not merely physical, but a "terrible distortion of the divine order" which involved "a warping of human personality, a twisting of relationship, and alienation from God and God's ways."²⁸²

277. John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 183.

278. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis*, 175.

279. Terrance E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 69.

280. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis*, 206; Longman, III and Garland, eds., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Genesis-Leviticus*, 84.

281. Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 2005), 47.

282. Richards and Richards, *Every Woman in The Bible*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 33.

Adam worked taking care of the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15). The work performed in the garden was a way of preserving creation and preventing chaos. Religious service closely connects Adam's work in the garden to worship and devotion to God instead of being a vocational toil.²⁸³ Adam lived a life of priesthood characterized by worship and obedience to God.²⁸⁴ When God declared that Adam and Eve would have to leave the Garden of Eden, the land and the people fell out of God's favor, protection, and blessing where their work ceased to be a pleasure but became toilsome, full of misery, suffering, and frustration (Gen 3:23-24).²⁸⁵

Adam and Eve's suffering did not end there, but later in life, they would suffer the death of one son (Abel) at the hands of the other (Cain) (Gen 4:8). Scripture does not reveal how Eve dealt with the death of her younger son nor any additional information about her other than that she gave birth to a third son who was the forefather of the Son of God (Gen 4:25).

God informed the serpent that his punishment would come when the woman's seed crushes Satan's head with his heel (Gen 3:15). This prophecy was fulfilled through Jesus Christ and recorded by Paul in his letters to the early churches. Paul wrote that victory over Satan in terms of the serpent crushed under the foot (Rom 16:20), Jesus having been born of a woman's seed (Gal 4:4), and how Jesus destroyed Satan through His death (Heb 2:14). John echoed the Genesis prophecy's fulfillment when he wrote that Satan would go to war against the woman and her offspring. (Rev 12:9,17, NKJV)

283. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis*, 172-173.

284. Longman, III and Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 79.

285. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis*, 229; Hamilton, *Handbook on the Pentateuch*, 48.

Hagar: Finding Hope in Suffering

Hagar was a servant of Sarai/Sarah and eventually became Abram/Abraham's wife (Gen 16:1-3, 5-6,8; 21:10,12-13).²⁸⁶ After God promised Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, Sarah failed to conceive a child, and they grew impatient waiting for the fulfillment of God's promise (Gen 16). Rather than waiting on God, Sarah gave her servant Hagar to Abraham as his wife in hopes of having a child. Hagar conceived quickly, and animosity arose between Sarah and Hagar, but Abraham refused to intervene.²⁸⁷ Hagar may have felt a myriad of emotions over Abraham's refusal to defend her as his wife but instead left her to cope with her feelings of grief and sorrow alone.

In her despair, Hagar fled into the wilderness, where she encountered the angel of the Lord.²⁸⁸ God reassured Hagar that her descendants would be great in number, just as God promised Abraham. God also instructed Hagar to return home and to be submissive to Sarah.²⁸⁹

The angel of God said, "Go back to your mistress. Put up with her abuse." He continued, "I'm going to give you a big family, children past counting. From this pregnancy, you'll get a son: Name him Ishmael; for God heard you, God answered you. He'll be a bucking bronco of a man, a real fighter, fighting and being fought, always stirring up trouble, always at odds with his family" (Gen 16:9-12, MSG).

286. Terence E. Fretheim, *Abraham: Trials of Family and Faith* (Columbia, S.C: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 93. Fretheim described Hagar as a foreigner (Gen 16:1, 3; 21:9; 21:21), a woman, probably African, and slave.

287. Fretheim, *Abraham*, 95. Fretheim indicated the animosity between Sarai and Hagar resulted from Hagar's attempt to diminish Sarai's status in the family and elevate her status as mother-to-be of Abraham's child. Fretheim cross-references this thought with Proverbs 30:23 (MSG) "when a whore is voted 'woman of the year,' when a 'girlfriend' replaces a faithful wife."

288. Fretheim, *Abraham*, 96. Fretheim reminds the reader that the angel of the Lord is not merely a messenger, but God in human form (cf. 21:17-19; 22:11-12, 15-16; 31:11,13).

289. Fretheim, *Abraham*, 96. Fretheim suggests that Hagar will not experience true freedom in her future until she resolves her contempt for Sarah.

Hagar returned to Abraham's household and remained a slave girl to Sarah for the next sixteen years. Sarah mistreated her, but Hagar held fast to the promise of greatness for her son.

The Lord noticed Hagar's affliction and saw her for "who she was—a human being, a mother, a woman worthy of her line of descendants."²⁹⁰ Chris Tiegreen described Hagar's struggles and related them to all humanity but indicated hope in these struggles through God's encounter. He concluded by stating:

Every human being is on a relentless search for identity, meaning, and fulfillment, and that search is often hindered by circumstances and relationships. Like Hagar, many people feel too insignificant to matter, even to God. Before Hagar encountered God, her identity was defined by others. Afterward, it was defined by Him. When we see God and we know that He sees us, our relentless search comes into focus. Even if our circumstances and relationships remain the same, we don't. An encounter with Him changes life forever.²⁹¹

Years later, Hagar and her son, Ishmael, were forced to leave Abraham's home (Gen 21:8-21). While they wandered in the wilderness, they exhausted their supplies, and Hagar feared death was imminent for them. She was so overcome with grief that she was unable to see the well in front of her. God opened her eyes and reiterated His promise to make Ishmael a great nation. The water in the well was a physical comfort to refresh her body. God's promise was her hope for the future.

Like Hagar, many people become trapped in the behavioral traditions which allow them to be victimized repeatedly by circumstances. The writer of Hebrews tells believers that Jesus, the High Priest, can empathize with humanity's weaknesses, for He faced all of

290. Chris Tiegreen, ed., *Dancing in the Desert Devotional Bible NLT: A Refreshing Spiritual Journey with God's People* (Cambridge: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2015), "Hagar's Value," 19-20.

291. Tiegreen, *Dancing in the Desert*, "Hagar's Value," 19-20.

the same tests and temptations believers do, yet He did not sin (Heb 4:15). As believers focus intently on preparing for eternal life, God's compassion, love, and guidance shine brightly and reveals how much God cares for His children and how much He wants His children to place their hope in Him instead of the hurtful things of life.

Joseph: God's Favor During Human Suffering

Joseph was the favored son of Jacob, who had a beautiful cloak made for Joseph. Jacob's favoritism caused a great deal of strife in the home. When Joseph was seventeen, he dreamt his family bowed down to him. As a result of Jacob's favoritism and Joseph's dreams, Joseph's brothers hated him. They had planned to kill him but sold him to a caravan and informed their father that Joseph had been killed (Gen 37). After being sold into slavery, a high-ranking official named Potiphar purchased Joseph (Gen 37:36). In Potiphar's household, the Lord blessed Joseph, and Joseph prospered (Gen 39:2-6). This prosperity was not without testing. Potiphar's wife was physically attracted to Joseph and decided to create an atmosphere conducive to seduction. When Joseph refused to participate in a sexual relationship with her, Potiphar's wife falsely accused Joseph of sexually assaulting her, and Joseph was imprisoned (Gen 39:7-20). While Joseph was in prison, God used the prison warden to show Joseph divine favor (Gen 39:21-23).

Pharaoh's baker and cupbearer were imprisoned and had dreams, which Joseph was able to interpret (Gen 40:1-22). The visions came to pass three days later. Two years later, Pharaoh had two dreams, and none of his officials could interpret his dreams. The cupbearer remembered how Joseph had interpreted his dream while they were in prison. Joseph was cleaned up, dressed, and brought before Pharaoh in hopes that he would be

able to interpret the dreams (Gen 41:1-24). After relating the meaning to Pharaoh, Joseph suggested a "wise and discerning" man be placed over grain collection and oversee it through the coming famine (Gen 41:33, NKJV). Pharaoh indicated that he felt Joseph was that man and gave him the authority to oversee the collection and preservation of reserves for the kingdom (Gen 41:41). Joseph went from feeling forgotten and forlorn in prison to being second in command in all of Egypt.

Through his suffering, Joseph discovered God's plan for his life: to be the vessel through which saved a nation from famine. Joseph displayed God's grace and mercy on his brothers by forgiving them when they arrived in Egypt, looking for food. God was present with Joseph throughout his tribulations and his successes. God did not abandon Joseph in his time of suffering, and He will not abandon His children as He calls and equips them to help guide others through their suffering.

Job: Remain Faithful while Suffering

The Book of Job used *ānî* and *ōnî* to describe the physical and mental suffering of the bereaved.²⁹² Job's examples of suffering included removing a child from their source of nourishment, swindling the poor, allowing the poor to remain unrobed, denying food to the hungry, and murdering the needy (Job 24:9-14). The antidote to suffering rests in God's wisdom, grace, and mercy.²⁹³ In the middle of the storm of grief and suffering, believers ought to cry out to God because He hears, listens, and understands their

292. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 777.

293. John H. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 1st ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012), 38.

circumstances (Job 29:12; 34:28). God will mete out justice on behalf of the sufferer and deliver the poor from affliction and oppression (Job 36:6, 15).

The account of Job is a perfect example of suffering bringing glory to God. God asked the adversary if he had considered Job. God called Job blameless and upright, implying that Job was the best of the best among men.²⁹⁴ Job's character was blameless (*tam*) instead of wicked or guilty, measured by integrity, all of which are human standards. His actions were upright (*yq̄sar*), meaning Job behaved according to God's expectations, specifically through faithfulness.²⁹⁵ Walton indicated that an upright person gains God's favor because He is upright and made humanity upright.²⁹⁶

The adversary responded that Job was only faithful because God provided for Job's every need and blessed everything he did. God countered by removing the protective fence with the caveat that the adversary was not to harm Job. Job was a man of great wealth and possessed seven thousand sheep, three hundred camels, five hundred yokes of oxen, and five hundred female donkeys. Job also had male and female servants under his authority and ten children. Compared to the curses outlined by Moses in Deut 28:31-35, Job's tragedies may seem to be punishment for his disobedience. However, Job was diligent in offering purification rituals for his children if they sinned and cursed God in their hearts (Job 1:5).²⁹⁷ The adversary caused Job to lose everything and everyone

294. Lijun Gu, "“Have You Considered My Servant Job?” A Reflection on the Book of Job,” *Perspectives on Political Science* 43, no. 3 (July 2014): 123.

295. Meir Weiss, *The Story of Job’s Beginning: Job 1-2: A Literary Analysis* (Jerusalem: Humanities Press, 1983), 25; Tremper Longman, III and David E. Garland, eds., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: 1 Chronicles–Job*, Revised ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 712; Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 57.

296. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 57.

297. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 70.

near to him. Rather than curse God, however, Job worshiped through his grief by declaring, "naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I will return to the womb of the earth. God gives, God takes. God's name be ever blessed" (Job 1:20-21, MSG). Job displayed acceptance and acknowledgment of God's remarkable power through his words and being prostrate before God, and not attributing any wrongdoing to God.²⁹⁸

Job's actions and words were not enough to convince the adversary, so God allowed the adversary to afflict Job severely without causing death. Job suffered multiple skin conditions, which caused him to use pottery shards to scrape his skin, thus inflicting further pain to himself, yet he did not grow angry or disillusioned with God. Job displayed his integrity through physical distress, emotional turmoil, and spiritual testing and did not attempt to justify God regarding his suffering.²⁹⁹

In the *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, Tremper Longman and Peter Enns explained this interaction between God, the adversary, and Job as follows:

Job is innocent of wrongdoing. He eliminates the usual answers offered in the ancient Near East, which contended either that there really was an offense that the sufferer was unaware of or that God is simply inscrutable. This cleans the slate of tradition to make room for new explanations. It is made clear that Job is not on trial. By permitting this adversary's course of action, God is allowing Job's case to stand as a test case for His policies. Any human can contend that it is not a good policy for God to allow righteous people to suffer. The challenge then targets a policy (attributed to God) that is formulated as a principle of retribution: the righteous will prosper, and the wicked will suffer. Job, in contrast, shows throughout that he is concerned not with restored prosperity (Job 9:21) but rather with clearing up the matter and restoring his reputation as a man who is righteous before God. He wants to contend with God because he has nothing to confess before God (Job 10:7, 13:19, 23, 23:11-12).³⁰⁰

298. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 71.

299. Longman and Garland, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 693.

300. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 336–337.

By the end of his story, God did not reveal the reason for his suffering to Job.³⁰¹

Longman clarified this concept by stating that people

focus on the question of why suffering is experienced by those who are conscientiously observant regarding every religious obligation that they know. Unlike the book of Job, the typical answers are either that there was an offense that they were unaware of (conveying that human offense is universal, even if some offenses could never be recognized as such) or that deity is inscrutable.³⁰²

During biblical times, it was common for people to rip their garments as a public display of grief or distress (which was often a great sacrifice because they may have possessed a single garment and would have to go through great lengths to make a new one).³⁰³ D. A. Carson described Jewish mourning and burial as follows:

Typical posture and length of time for the ritual period of mourning (Gen 50:10, 1 Sam 31:13, 1 Chr 10:12). Part of the mourning period was a time of stunned silence, shock, despair, and distress. Ezekiel describes himself as one participating in mourning rites. He is sitting among his peers, the exiles, in stunned silence and is motionless for a week as a result of the shocking news of the Lord (Job 2:13). By becoming what he ate, he becomes a mourner and subsequently does what mourners do.³⁰⁴

When a significant death occurred, tradition dictated grieving for seven days and seven nights, during which time the family would mourn, lament, and fast.³⁰⁵ Three of Job's friends heard of Job's calamity, set out to offer their sympathy, and found him sitting in the trash, with his head shaved, his clothing torn, and unrecognizable from a distance because of the impact of his physical afflictions.³⁰⁶ Eliphaz the Temanite was an

301. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 339.

302. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 335.

303. Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament* (WORDsearch CROSS e-book, n.d.), 121; D. A. Carson et al., NIV, *Biblical Theology Study Bible*, Gen 37:34. See study note on Job 2:13.

304. Carson et al., NIV, *Biblical Theology Study Bible*, study note on Ezek 3:15b, 1417.

305. Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, 122.

306. Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, 121; Marvin H. Pope, ed., *Job*, Revised ed. (New York, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 24.

Edomite, a descendant of Esau and Teman known for their wisdom.³⁰⁷ Bildad the Shuhite was an ancestor of Abraham through Keturah and lived in the land to the east.³⁰⁸ Zophar the Naamathite, who was possibly a descendant of Jebel el Naameh and lived near Tabuk.³⁰⁹

The friends banded together to offer consolation to Job but soon realized their anticipated conversations might have seemed inappropriate.³¹⁰ Albert Barnes suggested the men were so dumbstruck by the depth of Job's grief where the "effect of great calamity is often to prevent utterance" where profound silence is typical during mourning.³¹¹ They simply did not know what to say to Job. Marvin Pope indicated that comforters were not to engage in conversations until the mourner spoke first.³¹² Longman and Garland wrote about the seven days of silence as an immensely intense display of grief and concluded that breaking the silence before the mourner would have been in bad taste.³¹³

John Walton indicated Job's heaping ashes on his head was a common practice during mourning and attributed the availability of the ashes from the trash heap to Job's exile from the city due to his skin conditions.³¹⁴ According to Levitical law, a person who has open sores was considered unclean and had to be examined by the priest every seven days and live outside the camp away from others until his condition disappears (Lev

307 Longman, III and Garland, *Job*, 696.

308. Longman, III and Garland, *Job*, 697.

309. Pope, *Job*, 24.

310. Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, 122.

311. Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*, 122.

312. Pope, *Job*, 25.

313. Longman, III and Garland, *Job*, 721.

314. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 102.

13:1-46). Job's friends risked becoming ceremonially unclean by sitting with him in the trash heap, but they did not mind because they chose to remain at Job's side for seven days to offer comfort and friendship. They entered into Job's grief by actively displaying their mourning through torn clothing, heaping ashes on their heads, and sitting on the ground with their friend.

At the end of a series of conversations, God chastised Job's friends, and Job interceded on their behalf. Job continued to glorify God, and God blessed Job for his faithfulness. Christians should follow Job's example in glorifying God in the middle of their suffering, and they will be blessed.

Hannah: Finding Peace in Suffering

Another woman who found hope in her despair was Hannah, the wife of Elkanah (1 Sam 1). She was unable to conceive a child and would spend hours grieving and weeping. Elkanah did not understand that their culture defined women by their ability to produce an heir, and Hannah was barren. God heard her cry of despair and promised her a son. This promised child came with a price. Hannah surrendered her prayer to God and promised to consecrate to the Lord "the one thing that had become the most important to her life: a son."³¹⁵ In giving up to God, the one thing that was most precious to her, Hannah "found her inner peace."³¹⁶

Hannah had to find peace in her struggle. When she did, God answered her prayer. Many people have difficulty arriving at a place of peace when facing trials.

315. Richards and Richards, *Every Woman in The Bible*, 109.

316. Richards and Richards, *Every Woman in The Bible*, 109.

Hannah is an example for others to follow in finding peace when facing life's storms. God's peace will help the sufferer endure their grief journey.

Rizpah: Finding God Through Laments

For Rizpah, one of King Saul's wives, an offense occurred which caused her suffering. Saul had destroyed the Gibeonites, and as an act of retribution, they demanded David, who had become the king, surrender the lives of seven of Saul's sons. Among the hanged men were Armoni and Mephibosheth, sons of Rizpah. Rizpah's motherly grief was compounded by her culture's traditions, which allowed for her executed sons' burial but discouraged lamentation.

Rizpah ignored tradition and was steadfast in guarding the bodies of her sons. She "spread sackcloth, symbolic of overwhelming grief, and settled down to keep the bodies safe from birds and animals...for five long months" (2 Sam 21:8-10, NKJV). Rizpah expressed her grief over her sons' deaths and lamented because her culture's traditions forbade her from giving her boys a proper burial and finding closure in her grief journey.

Habakkuk: God's Sovereignty in Suffering

Habakkuk was a prophet who ministered to Judah after Jeremiah and before Ezekiel. Habakkuk's life is not detailed, but it is evident that he trusted God. Unlike the other prophets who spoke to the people on God's behalf, Habakkuk spoke to God on behalf of the people.³¹⁷ The discussion between God and Habakkuk is in the form of a lament. As

317. Andrew E. Hill et al., *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Daniel-Malachi*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, New, Revised edition. (Zondervan Academic, 2009), 606.

mentioned above, a lament flows through a distinct pattern (initial petition, confession of trust, petition for favor or intervention, vow of praise, and thanksgiving in anticipation).

Habakkuk's opening petition displayed his boldness by asking God the difficult questions: How long? Why is God not listening? Why does God tolerate wrongdoing? Has God abandoned His people? (Hab 1:1-4, NKJV). Habakkuk is frustrated with the injustice, wrongful suffering, destruction, violence, strife, and conflict surrounding Israel's people. The Israelites have been in a cycle of high hope and broken hope because there is paralysis of the law, justice never prevails, the wicked hem in the righteous, and justice is perverted.³¹⁸ Habakkuk asked God if He was listening, which indicates he thought God should take action.³¹⁹ Habakkuk sees all that is taking place and asks God why he allows the violence, meaning "flagrant violation" of morality and ethics, to continue.³²⁰ The Israelites have rejected the law, which led to the law's diminished effectiveness by corrupt religious and civil leaders.³²¹

Believers should feel confident enough to ask God questions boldly and know that He will respond as He did with Habakkuk. God responded to Habakkuk that He had heard Israel's pleas, but their sins could not go unpunished, and the Babylonians would deliver the pronounced judgment (Hab 1:5-11). The Babylonians are not only guilty of boasting of their military strength and cruel actions; they are also guilty of worshipping the gods of their strength and power.³²² God directs Habakkuk to look globally, not just

318. James Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, Fifth Impression ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2004), 209.

319. Hill et al., *Daniel-Malachi*, 611.

320. Hill et al., *Daniel-Malachi*, 611.

321. Hill et al., *Daniel-Malachi*, 612.

322. Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 211–212.

regionally, to see that He is sovereign over both Babylon and Judah, and God's purposes provide redemption, which can only be understood by the revelation of Himself through faith.³²³ God had told Habakkuk the Israelites would be utterly amazed at the Babylonians' fate, referring to what they would see.³²⁴ However, the righteous would be faithful because they believed and not merely what they had seen.

As Habakkuk begins to process God's announcement, shock, panic, and crisis develop as seen in the personalization of his plea, "My God, My Holy One."³²⁵ As Habakkuk rephrased his question to God, he confessed his trust in the Lord by saying

O Lord, are you not from everlasting? My God, My Holy One, we will not die. O Lord, you have appointed them to execute judgment. You, my rock, have ordained them to punish. Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrongdoing (Heb 1:12-13a, NKJV).

Habakkuk, being a prophet of hope, is willing to bear the consequences of the judgment for Israel's rebellion because he knows that God will not destroy Judah's people but will purify them. Habakkuk had a relationship and a history of trust with God that was personal and eternally focused.³²⁶ Habakkuk then asked God to show mercy on Judah because the Babylonians were merciless in their war strategies (Heb 1:3b-2:1). Habakkuk proceeds to list objections to the Babylonian's activities: baiting, hooking, and catching the righteous (abuse of the people); rejoicing and gladness (Babylonian happiness); sacrificing and burning incense to idols (false worship); living a luxurious lifestyle and eating lavish meals (living the high life).³²⁷

323. Hill et al., *Daniel-Malachi*, 613.

324. Hill et al., *Daniel-Malachi*, 614.

325. Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 212.

326. Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 216.

327. Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 213.

God agreed with Habakkuk's assessment of the Babylonian army and indicated that the Babylonians would later be destroyed (Hab 2:2-20). In the middle of Habakkuk's lament, God stated:

For the revelation awaits the appointed time. It speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it lingers, wait for it. It will certainly come and will not delay. See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright-but the righteous will live by his faithfulness (Hab 2:3-4, NKJV).

God is telling Habakkuk that catastrophe will come to the people of Judah, and death is a certainty for both the wicked and the righteous. However, the righteous will persevere if they prepare through healthy and faithful ways and live in the hope of a future with God even though they may not fully understand or accept what has occurred.³²⁸

The last chapter of Habakkuk contains the remainder of the lament. He praised the Lord and displayed trust that God was still present and watching over Judah's people (Hab 3:1-15). Habakkuk finished his lament by thanking God for being his joy and strength (Hab 3:16-19). Habakkuk's book reminds believers that God is with His children at all times and is providing a way to ease their suffering. Although the path is often painful, it is necessary to purge the evil and allow God's glory to shine through.

Jesus, The Suffering Servant

The book of Isaiah, which was written up to seven hundred and forty years before the birth of Jesus, records the most information about the person and work of Christ. In his

328. Bruckner, *Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah*, 219.

gospel, Matthew utilized Isaiah's text to authenticate the divine nature of Jesus, born into a Jewish family. Matt 1:20-23 indicates that Mary conceived and bore a son, which fulfilled Isa 7:14. The Magi in Matthew 2:11, who followed the star, represents the nations and kings that follow the brightness of the Lord's light (Isa 60:1-3). Matt 4:13-16 records Jesus moving from Nazareth to Capernaum fulfilling Isaiah's sign of the Messiah (Isa 9:1-2). Jesus told John's followers to report that they had seen the blind receive their sight, the lame could walk, the lepers were cleansed, and the deaf could hear, just as Isaiah prophesized would happen (Matt 11:5; Is 35:5-6). Matt 12:18-20 quotes Isa 42:1-3, which refers to Jesus as God's servant and the one whose name will give hope to the Gentiles.

The connections between Matthew and Isaiah continue throughout the gospel. In chapter 27, Jesus stands trial before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, is tortured, and then crucified, which fulfills the prophecy of the suffering servant (Isa 52:12-53:12). To illustrate the connection between Jesus in Matthew's gospel and Isaiah's suffering servant, a closer look at the passage in Isaiah is necessary.

Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for [that] which had not been told them shall they see; and [that] which they had not heard shall they consider (Isa 52:13-15).

By utilizing the phrase "Behold!" in Isa 52:13, God identifies and introduces the servant who "belongs to God and serves him."³²⁹ As God's servant, one must be willing

329. Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Volume 3: Chapters 40-66*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 335.

to deny personal desires to follow God's plan and will, regardless of the amount of suffering necessary to achieve the desired result.³³⁰ In the process of fulfilling God's plan, the servant's appearance will be significantly disfigured as "an extremely strong way of saying how great his sufferings were."³³¹ Isaiah 50:6 describes how the servant voluntarily suffered by scourging, having his beard plucked, spit upon, and mocked. Matthew 27:26-44 describes how Jesus was scourged, spat upon, beaten, and mocked by those crucifying him.

In addition to suffering, the servant will "sprinkle" the nations. The sprinkling of oil, water, or blood was part of the cleansing or purifying rituals performed by the priests as outlined in the Mosaic law (Lev 4:6, 8:11, 14:7).³³² Peter opens his letter by noting the necessity of sprinkling of Jesus' blood (1 Pet 1:2). The sprinkling of the servant's blood will be necessary for the cleansing of humanity's sins.

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?
For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry
ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, no beauty
that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows,
and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were faces from him; he was despised,
and we esteemed him not (Isa 53:1-3).

The root mentioned here reflects Isaiah's earlier prophecy: "and there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit" (Isa 11:1).³³³ Matthew begins his gospel with Jesus' lineage, tracing back to Abraham. Within that genealogy, Jesse was listed (vs. 5), and his descendants began with David, who

330. Geoffrey Grogan, "Isaiah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Proverbs ~ Isaiah*, ed. Tremper Longman, III and David E. Garland, Revised ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2008), 798.

331. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 338.

332. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 338; Grogan, "Isaiah," 799.

333. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 342.

became king (vs. 6) and ends with Joseph, husband of Mary, and step-father of Jesus.

(Mat 1:1-16). Additionally, Isaiah mentions that the servant will be despised and rejected,

which is what occurs as Jesus hangs on the cross (Matt 27:39-43).

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he [was] wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa 53:4-6).

The suffering servant was smitten to God, which "suggests a humbling and oppressing" and the Chastisement of our peace "because of our sins, God was not at peace with us."³³⁴ In the New Testament, Jesus symbolically became the scapegoat for humanity.³³⁵ John records that Jesus is the propitiation for the world's sins (1 John 2:2), and Peter indicates "our sins he has borne in his body upon a tree" (1 Pet 2:24). In addition to bearing the weight of humanity's sins, Jesus performs many miracles, including the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (Matt 8:14-17), and indicates that was in fulfillment of Isa 53:4.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither [was any] deceit in his mouth.

John the Baptist identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29), and Jesus identified himself as the way, the truth, and the life

334. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 347–349.

335. Grogan, "Isaiah," 800–801.

(John 14:16) who suffered voluntarily and said willingly lays down his life (John 10:18).³³⁶ When Jesus was arrested and stood trial, he did not defend himself (Matt 27:14).³³⁷ Isaiah indicated the servant would be counted among the wicked (Isa 53:9), and Jesus was crucified between two criminals (Mat 27:38,44). Isaiah also indicated that the servant would be among the rich in death. When Jesus was taken off the cross, Joseph of Arimathea put Jesus in his tomb (Matt 27:57-60).

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put [him] to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see [his] seed, he shall prolong [his] days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, [and] shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him [a portion] with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isa 53:12 is fulfilled Luke 23:34; Mark 15:27-28).

When he was in the garden praying, Jesus said that his soul was deeply grieved to the point of death (Matt 26:38), fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy about the great anguish of soul and the "abundant satisfaction" to come.³³⁸ John indicated the fulfillment of that satisfaction when he wrote: "worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (Rev 5:12). Finally, Isaiah foreshadowed that the servant would intercede for his transgressors which is the "basis of the intercession is the substitutionary expiation of the servant."³³⁹ In the middle of the people's mocking and gambling for his clothing, Jesus, hanging on the

336. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 350.

337. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 351.

338. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 356.

339. Young, *Isaiah, Volume 3*, 359.

cross, prays for the people saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

As discussed in this section, it is easy to see that the prophet Isaiah's suffering servant was a foreshadowing of the coming Messiah in the person of Jesus. Chris Tiegreen wrote the following about the Suffering Servant:

It is virtually impossible from a Christian perspective not to connect the mysterious servant in Isaiah with the Messiah portrayed in the Gospels. Justice for all who have been wronged (Isaiah 42:1-3), glory to God (49:3), Israel's restoration to God (49:6), salvation to the ends of the earth (49:6), comfort for the weary (50:4), the wholeness and healing of God's people (53:5), forgiveness of sin and rebellion (53:10-12), good news for the poor, comfort for the brokenhearted, release for the captives (61:1), beauty for ashes and celebration instead of mourning (61:3).³⁴⁰

Matthew's gospel shows the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy throughout his book, most significantly in chapter 27. Although Isaiah's suffering servant prophecy is fulfilled throughout the New Testament, Matthew contains the most direct quotes and references to Isa 52:12-53:12.

Jesus' Suffering

Matthew's book connects the suffering servant in Isaiah to Jesus, but Luke reveals a greater depth to Jesus' suffering. Isaiah spoke of a virgin conceiving and giving birth to a boy called Immanuel, whose people would reject Him (Isa 7:14-15). From the moment of conception, Jesus' earthly life was filled with difficult times, but through it all, he kept his focus on pleasing God. Jesus is the example to follow when people struggle with

340. Tiegreen, ed., *Dancing in the Desert*, 737. "The Servant's Suffering"

circumstances in their lives. The book of Luke provides many examples of challenging circumstances that Jesus conquered.

Jesus' earthly lineage is traced through his human father, Joseph, whose ancestors include King David, Boaz, Judah, Shem, Methuselah, and Seth, the third born son of Adam and Eve who were created by the hand of God (Luke 3:23-38). With this impressive lineage, it may have been assumed that Jesus would be raised in a life of luxury. However, that was not the case. Jesus' mother, impregnated by the Holy Spirit, was shunned by her community, and her betrothed was planning to quietly divorce her (Luke 2:26-38; Matt 1:18-19). After being born in an animal shelter, the baby Jesus was presented at the temple where the family encountered Simeon, who said that Jesus is a sign that will be oppressed and will reveal the thoughts of many (Luke 3:34-35). The young family then moves out of the country to avoid becoming the victim of King Herod's plan and returns to Nazareth when God indicated the time was right (Matt 2:13-23).

Once they returned to Nazareth, very little is mentioned about Jesus' life, but things change as he steps out into ministry at thirty-three. Immediately after being baptized by John, Jesus heads into the wilderness where he spends forty days being tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-13). During this time, the Holy Spirit was with Jesus, sustaining, and strengthening him. Jesus began teaching in the synagogue and quoted Isaiah 61:1-2 and told the congregation it was fulfilled. Despite angering the crowds and avoiding the plan to throw him off a cliff (Luke 4:28), Jesus fulfills Isaiah's prophecy

(Luke 4:18; 6:20-22; 7:22; 14:21). In contrast to the people of Nazareth rejecting the deity of Jesus (Luke 4:22), the demons understand Jesus' divine nature (Luke 4:34).³⁴¹

During His three years of ministry, Jesus "went about among those to whom official society gave no rights and met their needs—for food, friendship, forgiveness, love, healing, acceptance, dignity."³⁴² Throughout His ministry, Jesus would have many people who responded to His call of repentance. Jesus also had people who scoffed at Him and His message of salvation. Jesus rebuked those who had twisted the laws by saying it was possible to have salvation under the law. Jesus encouraged those who were seeking truth, healing, and forgiveness. Despite the widespread hopelessness and spiritual poverty, followers of Jesus can have hope and eternal life due to His death and resurrection.³⁴³

Jesus also suffered the grief of loss. Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he knows that the people of Jerusalem consistently reject God's word delivered by the prophets and often killed those prophets.³⁴⁴

During what is now known as Passion Week, Jesus suffered greatly at the hands of humanity. Their apostasy grieved Jesus deeply on many levels. The grief Jesus felt was apparent during his prayer time in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prayed for the people.

341. Martin W. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts: Implications for a Pentecostal Pneumatology*, 1st ed. (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2004), 54.

342. Christopher J.H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1992), 218.

343. Carson et al., *NIV, Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 2155 (note on 1 Thes 4:13–14). "The ancient Greek poet Theocritus concisely captures the widespread of hopelessness in the Greco-Roman world concerning life after death: 'Hopes are for the living, the dead have no hope.' (*Idyll* 4.42). The reason the Thessalonian church can have hope for their fellow believers who have died is grounded in Jesus' resurrection."

344. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts*, 57.

In his humanity, Jesus felt the weight of what was about to happen and pled with God to use a different method to accomplish humanity's salvation. In the deepest part of His despair, Jesus was in such agony that His sweat was drops of blood (Luke 22:44). In deference to His humanity, Jesus relinquished control of His life to God and said, "not My will but Thine be done" (Luke 22:42, NKJV).

Shortly after He spoke these words, Jesus was arrested and brought before the high priest for the first of many trials that he would endure at the hands of the Jewish priesthood (Luke 22:43-23:25). The very people Jesus loved, healed, and blessed cried for him to be crucified (Luke 23:25). Jesus suffered physically through the beatings and torture that left him almost unrecognizable.

Jesus suffered humiliation through being mocked, spat on, carrying a cross to die a criminal's death, and as prophesied, having his clothing stripped and used for gambling. The people he had spent three years ministering to, sharing meals with, and living life with could do nothing to save Him from physical pain and physical death. While hanging on the cross, one criminal joins the crowd and mocks Jesus, while the other criminal turns to Jesus and professes that Jesus' suffering was unwarranted. In response to the criminal's faith, Jesus tells him that they will be in paradise together (Luke 23:41-43).

Jesus cautioned his disciples to expect tribulation and not fear because he has overcome the world (John 16:33). Jesus' followers should expect their road to be difficult and therefore be prepared to experience opposition and trust Jesus through the adversity.³⁴⁵ Jesus promised to comfort those who mourn (Matt 5:4). Jesus told His

345. Darrell Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 326.

followers that He would send the Holy Spirit, *parakletos* (Παράκλητος) "to lead them to a deeper knowledge of the gospel truth, and give them divine strength needed to enable them to undergo trials and persecutions on behalf of the divine kingdom."³⁴⁶ Jesus was imparting hope to His disciples that they would not be alone. As Christians emulate Christ's response to suffering, they ought not to feel abandoned. Jesus experienced human emotions and physical pain that encompasses suffering in the flesh. Even if a believer's life ends as a martyr, God will reward them for their faithfulness.³⁴⁷ Jesus' words were meant not just for the disciples surrounding him but also for all the coming generations of believers. The believer's reward comes through persevering and remaining focused on God and pursuing his Will for his or her life.

Paul: Pressing on despite his Suffering

Saul was not a disciple during Jesus' ministry; in fact, Saul was a Pharisee and became a leader in Christians' persecution. Saul had many Christians imprisoned or killed and destroyed churches (Acts 8:3). Intending to follow Christians to Damascus to persecute them, Saul had a life-altering encounter with the Lord. Saul became zealous for Christ, which led him to experience deep and sincere sorrow when the Jews refused to believe in Jesus.³⁴⁸

God commissioned Saul to bring the Gospel message to the Gentiles. Saul began utilizing the name Paul when he was among the Gentiles. Paul was increasingly

346. Barclay Newman, ed., "Parakletos," *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament* (Germany: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2010), 136.

347. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts*, 74.

348. Carson et al., *NIV, Biblical Theology Study Bible*, 2035, see note on Rm 9:3.

persecuted as he boldly preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, Paul's message caused division among the people. So much so that Paul and Barnabas had to flee Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Antioch to avoid death.³⁴⁹ Paul is stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19). In Phillippi, Paul exorcised a demon from a slave girl, and her owner turns on Paul. Paul and Silas are arrested, flogged, and thrown in prison, where the jailer converts (Acts 16:19-36). The people dragged Paul out of the temple and beat him until the Roman commander intervened (Acts 21:30-33). Paul's Roman citizenship saved him from being scourged at the Roman soldiers' hands (Acts 22:24-26). Paul stood before the Sanhedrin, where Ananias commanded those surrounding Paul to strike him (Acts 23:2). After being shipwrecked on Malta, Paul was bitten by a viper while building a fire (Acts 28:3).

Paul asked God three times to remove a problem from his life, but God told him: "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9, NKJV). Despite the persecution, imprisonment, and physical harm, Paul persisted with his mission stating, "I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10, NKJV). Hall concluded that if humanity suffers from Jesus,

we may truly belong to his company. If we suffer with him, we may rejoice, knowing that we are participants in the reconciling work that God is achieving through him, knowing we are part of the story. Suffering, in short, is both conformation (the mode of our being conformed to the new identity) and confirmation (the confirmation of membership in his body).³⁵⁰

349. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts*, 118.

350. Hall, *God & Human Suffering*, 143.

Paul knew from where his strength to endure hardship came. The source is the same for the believers of today.

Paul wrote to the Colossian believers that

We have redemption, the forgiveness of sins, in Him. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For everything was created by Him ... For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of His cross—whether things on earth or things in heaven. Once, you were alienated and hostile in your minds because of your evil actions. But now He has reconciled you by His physical body through His death, to present you holy, faultless, and blameless before Him—if indeed you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and are not shifted away from the hope of the gospel that you heard (Col 1:14-23, NKJV).

Paul also wrote to the Corinthians to tell them:

Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ overflow toward us, so also our comfort through Christ overflows to you (2 Cor 1:3-5, NKJV).

Paul told the Corinthians that God "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor 3:16, NKJV). Paul reiterated this thought when he wrote to the Galatians, admonishing them to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2, NKJV). Walter Brueggemann concurred with Paul and wrote that Yahweh's love (*'ahab*), healing, and forgiveness are the antithesis of suffering.³⁵¹

351. Walter Brueggemann, *Theology of the Old Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1997), 441. God's love is displayed in the rehabilitation of Israel as promised in Jer 31:3 and Isa 48:14. God promised healing in Jer 30:17. God offered forgiveness as promised in Jer 31:34, 33:8, 36:3; Isa 55:7; Ezek 16:63; and Ps 103:9-14.

Scripture tells believers that they ought to use their tests and trials to show God's love, healing, and forgiveness as a guide for others when they face similar difficulties.

Paul warns the Romans that if they do evil, God will send someone to execute God's wrath on "him who practices evil. Therefore, you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience sake" (Rom 13:4-5). Paul, a Spirit-led witness who perseveres despite relentless pressures, then tells the Roman believers should exult in their tribulations because they bring about perseverance, which develops character, and creates hope (Rom 5:3-5).³⁵² As the Apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans,

We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us (Rom 5:3-5, NKJV).

Paul continued his letter to the Romans by telling them to be patient in tribulation (Rom 12:12). Tribulations could mean spiritual, mental, emotional, or physical problems. Paul experienced significant trials and tribulations, yet he never deviated from his faith in God. Yes, he was wary of suffering, but he did not give up. Paul explained this journey to Timothy and said,

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing (2 Tim 4:6-8).

All Christians can take comfort in the knowledge that they have done as Paul did by fighting the good fight and hope in the heavenly rewards that await them as they enter God's presence. In Revelation, John scribed the words of God. John heard a heavenly

352. Mittelstadt, *The Spirit and Suffering in Luke-Acts*, 118.

voice declaring blessed are those who died in the Lord, and the Spirit responded that believers would receive rest from their work and receive credit for their excellent works (Rev 14:13). Believers have the promise of soul rest when their physical suffering ends.

Life and death are part of the circle of life, but at the heart of suffering is "man's inhumanity to man" and disobedience to God's commands.³⁵³ Humanity's rejection of God's commands has resulted in individuals suffering the consequences of their actions, as Paul reminded the Galatians that humans reap what they sow (Gal 6:7). Suffering allowed Adam, Eve, Job, and Paul to be sanctified and mature in their relationship with God. The people mentioned above learned that suffering has value is relative to a person's ideals and lives in long-suffering hope.

Summary

Suffering, grief, hope, and comfort were examined through scripture and engaging with theologians. Biblical characters such as Adam and Eve, Hagar, Joseph, Hannah, Rizpah, Job, and Paul experienced pain and suffering, but their faith in God sustained them. As they journeyed through their painful circumstances, God remained steadfastly with them and was glorified. In the same manner that he sustained those in scripture, God will be with anyone who chooses to believe in him and place their trust in him.

353. George Arthur Buttrick, *God, Pain, and Evil* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 177.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction

When a child enters the world, the mother quickly forgets the pain she experienced as a new life's joy overwhelms her. The death of a loved one will cause pain to those who remain behind as the newly deceased person is rejoicing in the freedom of the heavenly realm. Fallen humanity was not promised a mortal life without pain. Jesus told His disciples that they could experience peace through Him by explaining that "in the world, you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33, NKJV). Believers will face problems in life but are guaranteed hope and comfort if they remain faithful to God. People find comfort and reassurance that God carries them as they experience their deepest pain.

Theology of Suffering and Grief

The origin of suffering

When God finished speaking the trees, land, plants, birds, and animals into existence, he formed a man out of the dirt (Gen 2:7). Adam and Eve would walk and talk with God face-to-face in the Garden of Eden. This relationship would change when humanity was tested and failed. Adam and Eve were tested by a serpent asking if God said they would die if they ate from the Tree of Life (Gen 3:1-3). Human sin originated with Adam and Eve, but sin was present before that.

The serpent in the Garden represented Satan, also known as Lucifer, an angel of God who fell from Heaven (Luke 10:18; Rev 12:9). John Walton indicated that Ezekiel described the adversary in the Garden of Eden.³⁵⁴

You were the sealer of perfection, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone was your covering, the ruby, topaz, and emerald, the chrysolite, onyx, and jasper, the sapphire, turquoise, and beryl; your settings and mounts were made of gold. On the day you were created, they were prepared. I placed you there with an anointed guardian cherub; you were on the holy mountain of God; you walked about amidst fiery stones. You were blameless in your behavior from the day you were created, until sin was discovered in you. (Ezek 28:12b-15, NKJV)

Lucifer committed the original sin through his prideful behavior. He used that pride to tempt Eve and Adam into thinking they could be like God. Jesus acknowledged Satan as the father of lies and a murderer and warned people to be alert against his schemes (John 8:44). As Lucifer grew increasingly prideful, he was banished from heaven. Earth became his domain, but Lucifer will reside in Hades for eternity. Isaiah described this pronouncement:

Look how you have fallen from the sky, O shining one, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the ground, O conqueror of the nations! You said to yourself, 'I will climb up to the sky. Above the stars of El, I will set up my throne. I will rule on the mountain of assembly on the remote slopes of Zaphon. I will climb up to the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High!' But you were brought down to Sheol, to the remote slopes of the pit (Isa 14:12-15, NKJV).

Luke recorded Jesus, confirming the fall as an eyewitness (Luke 10:18). Pride is still a leading problem in the current culture. People encounter suffering and inflict suffering on others because there is an inclination for them to believe they are all-knowing and all-powerful, which leads to disobeying God's commandments.

354. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Job*, 82-84.

Suffering caused by sin. Scripture confirms that all have sinned due to Adam and Eve's disobedience of God's command to admire but not partake from the Tree of Life. Adam and Eve suffered because they sinned. As a result, humanity has been born with an inherent tendency toward sin and suffering, which has grown increasingly prevalent with each new generation. Terrance Fretheim connects God's judgment on humanity's sin with natural disasters.³⁵⁵

George Buttrick noted that Christians are to suffer in the "midst of inexplicable pain and natural evil" as they provide a witness for Christ.³⁵⁶ When Buttrick made this observation, the world was experiencing a time of relative peace. World War II was a memory; the Vietnam War had not yet begun; tragedies such as kidnappings and major car collisions were the most significant sources of externally inflicted pain. Mass killings were not as prevalent as they are in the twenty-first century. Buttrick regarded suffering as a means of providing humanity with the opportunity to "offer God an unbribed worship."³⁵⁷ God sees Christians "through the joys of the natural world" when they suffer, and "though their evil and violence remain," God's loveliness and mercy still shines on them.³⁵⁸

People who encounter pain and suffering as a result of sin will not experience relief until they embrace the goodness and grace of God in their lives. According to Paul Billheimer, Christians cannot become Christlike without suffering because they must

355. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 4.

356. Buttrick, *God, Pain, and Evil*, 188.

357. Buttrick, *God, Pain, and Evil*, 166.

358. Buttrick, *God, Pain, and Evil*, 147.

deny their sinful human nature.³⁵⁹ Billheimer further suggested that as long as humanity rejects Jesus as Savior, their suffering will continue, and those who do not accept him will be separated eternally from God.³⁶⁰ He continued by stating when people accept suffering and pain, there is freedom from self-centeredness, which, in turn, frees people to love others unconditionally.³⁶¹ Suffering may enable a person to guide someone else through a similar circumstance.

God Understands Human Suffering and Grief

God understands human suffering and the havoc that results from it. God strongly desired a relationship with His people but was disappointed (Jer 3:19). God loved His children so much, but they continued to reject that loving relationship. Terence Fretheim wrote that God suffered because of the people of Israel and their rejection of Him.³⁶² God suffered from Israel because He was "anguished over the consequences for all aspects of the created order affected by the devastation."³⁶³

In light of God's omnipotence and goodness, sin and righteousness cannot occupy the same space.³⁶⁴ In conjunction with his power, God's goodness, his love, and his entire being are consistent decisions made by God.³⁶⁵ Adam and Eve received power from God,

359. Paul E. Billheimer, *Don't Waste Your Sorrows: A Study in Sainthood and Suffering* (Sheffield: Christian Literature Crusade, 1977), 47.

360. Billheimer, *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*, 25.

361. Billheimer, *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*, 51.

362. Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984), 112–113.

363. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 133.

364. Abraham van de Beek, *Why? On Suffering, Guilt, and God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 18.

365. van de Beek, *Why? On Suffering, Guilt, and God*, 265.

and when sin entered the picture, that power was misused, which almost immediately had adverse effects on the natural order. In Noah's time, the flood was directly related to human (and animal) violence and corruption of God's creation (Gen 6:11-13).³⁶⁶

In the flood narrative, God saw the wickedness of humanity and regretted creating them (Gen 6:5,7). God's sorrow over the depth of sin that humanity had fallen into caused him to decide to create a fresh start for his creation. The King James version stated the Lord was grieved (*wayyinnaḥem*) and his heart was filled with pain (*wayyit'aṣṣēb*), which displayed that the "grief and pain of human sin was not felt only by humankind."³⁶⁷ God lamented the wickedness of His creation but did not destroy them. John Piper said that "God may well be capable of lamenting over something he chose to bring about," and that He can feel sorrow for an "act because of foreknown evil and yet go ahead and do it for wise reasons."³⁶⁸

Fretheim surmised that the account of the flood was a "recharacterization of God" through:³⁶⁹

1. Dependent relationships where all creation will be affected by every other creature, and God has chosen to be part of these complex and intricate relationships.
2. Three types of change agents bring about God's work: (a) natural elements such as the water and the flood caused the earth's actual damage; (b) violence leads to disastrous environmental effects when the change agents utilize excessiveness to complete the task; and (c) righteous, blameless, and obedient behaviors can have positive effects on the future of creation. God places confidence in humanity, who

366. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 42. Fretheim directs his audience to the discussion of suffering as part of God's good creation in Douglas J. Hall's book *God and Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross* (Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1986), 53-67.

367. Longman and Garland, *Genesis*, 117.

368. John Piper, "Why Does God Regret and Repent in the Bible?" *Desiring God*, last modified October 24, 2016, accessed November 14, 2018, <https://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-does-god-regret-and-repent-in-the-bible>.

369. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 55–62. Fretheim's section on "The Flood Story as a Recharacterization of God" has been abridged for this paper.

were created in the image of God, to carry out the responsibility of caring for the earth and its creatures.

3. God is emotionally attached to his creation. He is impacted deeply and personally by the change in the relationship between himself and his creation.
 - a. The concept of God feeling regret for creating humanity stems from God's omniscience, knowing what might have been, and profoundly desires the intended relationship between humanity and himself.
 - b. God's plan for perfect harmony between himself and his creation was interrupted by the consequences of humanity's actions or lack of actions and not divine activity.
 - c. Human resistance occurs when humanity successfully detours around God's will, who places his divine self in a vulnerability that is impacted by humanity's choices.
 - d. God's change in strategy was brought about through the grief and agony God endured as humanity opted for apostasy rather than the desire committed relationship between humanity and the divine.
 - e. God's grief results from the state of his creation. Humanity's hearts are continually inclined to evil, which invokes disappointment and sorrow in God's heart. God is emotionally attached to his creation and, although creation is under judgment, God refuses to give up on having an intimate relationship with His creation
 - f. Creation's future is rooted in God's willingness to bear ongoing pain and sorrow as He determined to take humanity's suffering upon Himself and bear it for the sake of the world, which culminates at the Cross of Jesus.
 - g. God is in a committed, faithful relationship with His creation; humanity, however, continues to exercise its freedom to choose to respond with faithfulness or infidelity. Regardless of humanity's choice, God has decided to continue showering them with grace, mercy, patience, long-suffering, and abundant love.

Walton utilized the imagery of an accounting ledger to illustrate God's actions. In a ledger, all accounts must balance, and when the entries are not in balance, corrective entries occur. Walton went on to say people who suffered personal loss and are mourning will rebalance themselves through some corrective action. Walton continued this analysis by stating that when God has pronounced punishment, the counterbalance occurs within an act of grace.³⁷⁰

370. Walton, *The NIV Application Commentary Genesis*, 309–310.

In the center of God's grief, grace was abundant, and Noah was the object of that grace. As a result of that grace, God decreased the intensity of his actions.³⁷¹ Noah displayed obedient faith, and through him, God renewed his creation. Rather than destroying all humanity, God saved a remnant from which humanity would endure. God smelled the pleasant aroma of Noah's sacrifice and turned his actions based on an "incidental human gesture."³⁷² After the floodwaters receded, God promised to refrain from cursing the ground again because of humanity's wickedness.

God loved His people so much, but their wickedness grieved him. Unfortunately, God, who is holy and pure, cannot be in a relationship with sin. As the people's hearts drifted away from God, their wickedness increased the distance between them and God. God mourns with those who mourn, and, in order to redeem humanity's "brokenness and lovelessness," God sent his beloved son to suffer *like* humanity.³⁷³ God, who expressed sorrow in the Old Testament over Israel's rejection of him as their father, did not spare his son from dying a human death to restore Israel's broken relationship.

Fretheim wrote that God's grief over Israel's rejection became "embodied in the world in the life of the servant" and created the path for salvation.³⁷⁴ God, through the incarnation of Jesus, "took up our broken humanity into Himself and made it His own," and "because of love He identified himself with all our distress."³⁷⁵ The Spirit that led Jesus also comforted and ministered to him, but Jesus could not avoid the path of

371. Longman, III and Garland, *Genesis*, 118.

372. Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, 363.

373. Wolterstorff, *Lament for a Son*, 81.

374. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God*, 112–113.

375. Ware, *Orthodox Way*, 81.

suffering.³⁷⁶ Jesus came to earth to live as a man so that, "in His unfallen nature," humanity has a way of "being made in the divine image and capable union with God."³⁷⁷ It was part of God's plan to have his son be the ultimate sacrifice, so salvation would come to the world and close the gap between creation and its creator. God's salvation and redemption plan created space for pain when his only son died. When Christ gave up his Spirit, God suffered. The father's pain manifested itself in the darkness and the earthquake that fell upon Jerusalem. Through those manifestations, "the grief of the Father...is just as important as the death of the Son."³⁷⁸ God understands the suffering that a wounded family endures. When God enters "into the God-forsakenness of sin and death (which is nothingness), God overcomes it and makes it part of his eternal life."³⁷⁹ In death, there is hope. The soul of a person is eternal and will live on even though the physical body dies.

There is a difference between suffering as punishment, which flows from God's wrath, and suffering as chastisement, which flows from God's love.³⁸⁰ Theodore Epp viewed sin and suffering from the perspective that Christians do not suffer as payment for sin because Christ atoned for humanity's sins on the cross, but they suffer in order that "God's image—lost because of the Fall—might be restored in Him."³⁸¹ God allows suffering to bring glory to himself through the use of mourning and lamenting.

376. Clark H Pinnock, *Flame of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 87.

377. Ware, *Orthodox Way*, 71.

378. Ford and Higton, *Theologian's Reader*, 92.

379. *Fortress Introduction to Contemporary Theologies*. ed. L. Miller and Stanley J. Grenz (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 117.

380. Longman and Enns, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 336–338.

381. Epp, *Why Do Christians Suffer?*, 8.

God prefers humanity to opt for self-control and choose blessing rather than curses. Throughout the Pentateuch, the laws display a moral order that introduces an action and consequence scale, which creates the opportunity for suffering.³⁸² The Ten Commandments admonished the Israelites not to bow before, or worship, idols because God will punish the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate him, but give blessings to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments (Exod 20). God put boundaries in place to help protect the Israelites from outsiders and each other. However, the critical consideration will be if humanity will choose to call out to God and to follow his commands so he can protect them.

Suffering Brings Growth

A caterpillar does not become a beautiful butterfly without going through a period of change called metamorphosis. An egg is laid, which grows into a caterpillar. During the caterpillar stage, the skin sheds 4 or 5 times as it eats and grows. When the caterpillar is full-grown, it stops eating and wraps itself in a cocoon for a time. When the time comes, the cocoon cracks, and the butterfly struggles to emerge. Through this struggle, a butterfly's abdomen squeezes, and the fluid fills the wings. The adult butterfly then flies off and will lay more eggs. In this life stage, the butterfly has attained a beautiful body but only survives for a couple of weeks.

382. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 113.

The path a person moves through when becoming a Christian is similar to that of the butterfly. Just as the caterpillar transforms into a butterfly, a new believer will go through transitions as they move from being a nonbeliever to a new believer and becomes a mature Christian. Before salvation, a person was living a sinful life. Once the person encounters Jesus through salvation, the new believer will need time to adapt to the new life. During a Christian's larvae stage, there is substantial growth and maturity taking place. There may be times when the Christian feels alone and forgotten, but slowly their metamorphosis occurs. It is not possible for a caterpillar to bypass the larvae stage and go straight to the butterfly stage. If a butterfly does not struggle to free itself from the cocoon, then it will not survive. The Christian will not mature if they do not encounter struggles. Every struggle squeezes the sin out of someone, just as the butterfly must squeeze the fluid out of its abdomen so it can fly. Christ-followers cannot expect to jump from being a new convert to a mature believer instantaneously but must deepen their faith as they overcome struggles.

Abraham Van De Beek wrote that it is currently "not vogue" to equate suffering with punishment for sinning because it is not congruent with modern culture's image of oneself and God.³⁸³ Fretheim contends that God is the author of suffering as it brings about God's purposes, and all creation must suffer to grow. God permits but does not initiate all suffering. God may allow people to suffer as discipline, to bring growth in someone's faith, or to bring about his redemptive purposes. Douglas John Hall surmised that humanity's suffering arose from four factors: loneliness, such as Adam lamented to

383. van de Beek, *Why? On Suffering, Guilt, and God*, 54.

God in the Garden of Eden; human limitations encountered through existence, power, intelligence; temptation or sin; and anxiety arising from ignorance.³⁸⁴

Randy Becton appears to be somewhere between Fretheim and Hall as he concluded that suffering comes in two distinct forms: sin (humanity acting on evil thoughts) and natural causes (like hurricanes and death from old age).³⁸⁵ There are two causes for suffering related to sin: self-inflicted or other-inflicted. Self-inflicted suffering stems from an individual's choices, actions, or inactions. Other-inflicted suffering originates when a person gives in to the impulse and desire to harm another individual.³⁸⁶

Intentional or unintentional circumstances can cause suffering. It is considered intentional suffering when one person seeks retribution against someone else through negative comments or physical acts of violence. Unintentional suffering is the ripple effect of intentional suffering. For example, a person chooses to drink and drive, which then causes a fatal car collision. The other-inflicted suffering causes death and destruction of physical property (vehicles and anything damaged during the crash), which leads to unintentional suffering. Another example would be a couple in the divorce process where one parent refuses to allow the other parent visitation with the children. The intentional suffering is against the parent, and the child(ren) suffers unintentionally.

People who experience suffering will either recover or die. In this case, the death may not be a physical death but an emotional, mental, or spiritual death. Modern culture no longer embraces death as a family ritual but pushes it out of sight. Anderson says that

384. Hall, *God & Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross*, 54–56.

385. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 45.

386. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 114.

"death has become institutionalized and professionalized," where the family does not participate in the dying rituals (which have been reduced to monitoring vital body functions, medications, and life support machinery).³⁸⁷

The manner in which a person chooses to react to the suffering presented to them will often determine the outcome. When people accept the suffering with resignation and an attitude of self-pity, the doors to their emotions are flung wide open, which creates the potential for depression, anxiety, and even suicidal thoughts to penetrate their thought patterns. However, when suffering is approached through "Christ-focused lenses," the severity and duration of suffering are often diminished. Through prayer, worship, and trusting him, God provides strength to endure, healing in physical, emotional, and spiritual areas, and the constant presence of peace and comfort. People's faith is stretched through difficult circumstances as they cling to the hope offered by God.

Theology of Hope and Comfort

There are many times that people need to be acknowledged and told that they have worth.³⁸⁸ Allender summarized a cultural issue by saying that people go beyond merely avoiding pain into the realm of escaping from the reality of their lives.³⁸⁹ Escaping may work temporarily, but it eventually kills the soul. He continues this thought by describing death as both reality and symbolic, where death is the result of "separation from the status

387. Anderson, *Theology, Death, and Dying*, 19.

388. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998), 136–140.

389. Dan Allender, Tremper Longman, and Joni Eareckson Tada, *The Cry of the Soul: How Our Emotions Reveal Our Deepest Questions About God*, New ed. (NavPress, 2015), 3.

you get from your work, the respect you receive from others, the benefits from your material possessions, [and] the presence of your loved ones."³⁹⁰

Death leaves its mark on the soul. Fear and despair are two side effects of grief. Despair is "the utter absence of any sense of hope, accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness. Despair leads to resignation and possibly suicide."³⁹¹ These emotions can be dispelled or diminished by a deepening relationship with God. Intimacy with God fosters hope, where "hope is a loan from the past and the future, enabling us to deal with the debt of the present."³⁹² God's promise arises from the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross and the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁹³ Hope is the key to restoration.

The Bible offers hope to all who are weary as a result of their sorrow and grief. A psalmist wrote, "the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear Him, in those who hope in His mercy" (Ps 147:11). Hope, expectation, and mercy are not physical comforts but are spiritual and emotional in nature. God promised to bring hope and comfort to people when they experience positive and harmful pain. The Christian's faith is the key to overcoming his or her suffering.³⁹⁴ Moltmann said, "from first to last, and not merely in the epilogue, Christianity is eschatology, is hope, forward-looking and forward moving, and therefore also revolutionizing and transforming the present."³⁹⁵ By focusing on their spiritual health and not their clouded emotions, sufferers can point others to God.

390. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 63.

391. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 115.

392. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 197.

393. Miller and Grenz, *Fortress Introduction*, 107.

394. Longman and Enns, *Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 779.

395. Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 16.

God promises eternal life for those who believe in Him (John 3:16). The writer of Hebrews encourages others "so that you may not grow weary or lose heart" (Heb 12:3), and that Jesus "might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb 2:14-15). Christians need to remain strong in their faith.

John wrote that "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). The hope John speaks of is a future free of pain and suffering. As an individual nears death, the physical body is left behind, and the unbroken spirit of the dying enters into eternity with the heavenly father. Scripture states that the "day of one's death is better than the day of one's birth" (Eccl 7:1b). Upon death, a Christian enters into eternity and experiences the "moment of return to God" and the heavenly rest.³⁹⁶

This hope can only manifest itself through the power of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Four areas where God's love and restoration can be experienced and emphasized are as follows.

- a) Greater empathy: grief can make one aware of wounds in others in ways not understood before. "Mourn with those who mourn" (Rom 12:15b), "share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ" (2 Cor 1:3-6).
- b) Healthier priorities: loss can bring things into focus. One can emerge from grief stronger, finding unrecognized strength within.
- c) Deeper communion with God: many people who have gone through grief have testified that they have come out on the other side with a renewed sense of God's love for them. Grief can start with fracturing a person's faith but end with a deeper trust in God and a greater reliance on Him as the source of comfort.

396. Pinnock, *Flame of Love*, 182.

- d) New and renewed relationships: find the support needed in family members, close friends, church family, and maybe even strangers. The ending of a romantic relationship may open avenues for new relationships and opportunities in life a person had not considered before."³⁹⁷

People who are journeying through grief or suffering can help console and minister to other sufferers even as they focus on healing in these areas in themselves.

The Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) is foundational in creating a theology of hope and comfort. Grieving individuals often need genuine compassion and love, which can only come from God. Through the display of godly love, the bereaved individuals can experience joy, peace, patience, kindness, and gentleness once again. Love opens the heart to hope, the hope of a future, and the hope of seeing loved ones again. There is hope that a person consists of more than the mistakes previously made and the circumstances which caused suffering. Many biblical figures encountered suffering and grief but were able to cling to the hope that God was greater than their suffering. It took the strength of character, perseverance, and long conversations with God to overcome the obstacles that threatened to maintain a firm grip on their mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

Researchers Joshua Wilt, Julie Exline, Joshua Grubbs, Crystal Park, and Kenneth Pargament studied the correlation between a person's spiritual mindset and mental health. Wilt et al. concluded:

the present research helps to bridge the gap between how people make sense of suffering and their actual experience of religious/spiritual struggles and well-being. People who believe that suffering is part of God's benevolent plan, as well as people who believe that a nonbenevolent God causes suffering, are more likely to wrestle with conflicts concerning the divine. Divine struggle, in turn, is

397. Jessica Curiel, "Finding Hope in Jesus: Comfort for Loss," (Rose Publishing, 2011), 9–10.

associated with lower well-being and higher levels of distress. Yet, beliefs attributing a benevolent role to God in suffering are also directly supportive of higher well-being, along with beliefs about God's unlimited knowledge of the future and prevention of suffering.³⁹⁸

When there is the assurance of God being sympathetic to human pain, then the meaninglessness and barrenness of suffering dissipate.³⁹⁹ Fretheim said, "everyone and everything is in [a] relationship; reality is relational."⁴⁰⁰ It helps people who suffer themselves to help others navigate their grief because "in the process, the wounded healer's own scars may fade away."⁴⁰¹ Personal healing is often found in the process of helping others navigate their grief because it takes the focus off themselves and onto someone else.

Humans seem to want to know why suffering has impacted their lives. Jessica Curiel provides an answer to this question with the following statement,

When it comes to suffering losses, we must learn to live with some unanswered questions. Yet God still wants us to trust in Him. Trust takes faith. If we knew all the answers and everything that was going to happen, then it would not be trusted. God does not promise to insulate us from all losses, but He will carry us through every one of them.⁴⁰²

Christians can become more effective in showing others how God breaks the grief and protest cycle, complete with rage and anger, and offers rehabilitation and restoration

398. Joshua Wilt et al., "God's Role in Suffering: Theodicies, Divine Struggle, and Mental Health," *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* 8, no. 4 (2016): 361. Wilt et al., "tested a mediation model specifying that divine struggle (e.g., anger at God, feeling punished or abandoned by God) mediates the associations of beliefs about suffering with psychological distress and mental health."

399. Wilt et al., "God's Role in Suffering," 160.

400. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 9.

401. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 169, 198.

402. Curiel, "Finding Hope in Jesus," 8.

in its place.⁴⁰³ Believers are not immune to wondering why trials arise, but they can find peace in knowing that God promises to be near and with them through it all.

Authentic compassion meets people where they are, where they want to go, and how to help them travel their journey.⁴⁰⁴ James Poling indicated that compassion is a "communal spiritual practice," which includes unconditional acceptance, endurance, and courage.⁴⁰⁵ Larry Graham expounded on Poling's definition of showing unconditional acceptance to permit space for the sufferer to reclaim life. One's endurance consists of the ability to persist, follow through, and act as necessary to explore the new dimensions of life. Courage is necessary to face adversity, which will invariably arise.⁴⁰⁶

In general, people should not become frustrated with one who is suffering or grieving but should offer genuine comforting phrases and actions to support the bereaved. Fellowship with friends and other Christians alleviates the emptiness created by grief. External resources, such as demonstrations of commitment, care, and acceptance, enable people to draw on inner resources to regain balance spiritually and emotionally.⁴⁰⁷

Consoling others may provide positive and encouraging interaction to the bereaved. Studies have determined that grieving people who have some degree of religious belief recover from their bereavement sooner than those without a faith background.⁴⁰⁸

403. Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, 437.

404. Lloyd and Carson, "Making Compassion Count," 616.

405. Poling, *Render unto God*, 234–236.

406. Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 12.

407. Stone et al., "Church Members," 413.

408. Walsh, et al., "Spiritual Beliefs," 1551.

Outcome of bereavement for participants who completed the study, for each spiritual belief category, using the core bereavement items* scale

1 month	28.62	27.03	25.37	26.44
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When living with a new normal, remember that life is an ongoing process. People need to accept the change and not pretend that life will be the same as before the loss. The "process" of grieving has not ended, but the irreversibility of loss is accepted, and it is necessary to move forward in life. Grief becomes recognizable, and the emotions can be processed; however, "grief can come and go in the life of an individual."⁴⁰⁹ Every time a special occasion arrives, grief can be triggered. As people journey through their grief, they must learn to celebrate their loved one's enjoyment of each occasion and not allow emotions to diminish deceased loved ones' memory.

The family must now create a "new normal" for themselves, a new life that does not include the deceased. The church can help them with this creation of their new normal. Through the church's emotional, physical, and spiritual support, a bereaved family will slowly move through grief.

People who are suffering or grieving may require guidance in understanding or remembering God's unconditional love and that God knows their hearts and pain. Despite their current pain, they will eventually feel God's presence once again.⁴¹⁰ Attempting to "talk them out of being angry" may only make them angrier, but, instead, "help them understand this is normal and their faith will eventually strengthen them."⁴¹¹

9 months	26.00	26.36	22.98	24.76
14 months	27.53	19.82	20.61	21.08

*Pargament, et al., "Patterns of Positive and Negative Religious Coping," 714. This study described bereavement and religious coping in five categories: religious participation, religious importance, perceived social support, cognitive processing of the loss, and finding meaning in the death.

409. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 45.

410. Dickie Hill, "The Grieving Christian Father: What Are His Needs?," *Journal of Pastoral Counseling* 38 (November 2003): 82.

411. Hill, "The Grieving Christian Father: What Are His Needs?," 82.

With some guidance, a person's defense mechanisms of "self-sufficiency, perfectionism, alibis, denial of reality, pride, compulsion to manipulate" can be identified and diminished.⁴¹² As healing occurs, "love, friendliness, and peacefulness [may] begin filling the void left by the negative, aggressive feelings and defense mechanisms" and encourage the development of "new ways to cope with the present crisis situation."⁴¹³

When people who are wounded, suffering, and grieving are provided with a safe atmosphere to heal, they feel different inside and experience a more "organic development process."⁴¹⁴ When safety is perceived and received, the "problem of commitment, alignment, motivation, and change just melt[s] away."⁴¹⁵ For people who turn "the fact of potential into the fact of results," the changes and goals take a new life.⁴¹⁶ Many people interviewed indicated that a support group would "provide a venue for parents to remember and talk about their child without infringing time limits on their grief."⁴¹⁷ Often, "bereaved parents were frequently the targets of unwanted advice and information."⁴¹⁸ In cases like this, the greatest gift a church can give these congregation members is protection.⁴¹⁹ The Bible tells Christians in Rom 12:15 to "rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

The church has a Christ-centered charismatic spirituality characterized by a "passionate desire to meet with Jesus Christ...as savior, sanctifier, healer, baptizer with

412. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 33.

413. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 34–35.

414. Jim Collins, *Good to Great* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishing, 2001), 168.

415. Collins, *Good to Great*, 176.

416. Collins, *Good to Great*, 177.

417. Paige Toller, "Bereaved Parents' Experiences of Supportive and Unsupportive Communication," *Southern Communication Journal* 76, no. 1 (2011): 27.

418. Toller, "Bereaved Parents," 29.

419. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 29.

the Spirit [and coming King]" and has evolved into the representation of "the Christian community in its totality." More recently, the church is universal, which is one, holy, catholic, apostolic, and has Christ as the head (Col 3:1). The church's design is to "function as a community" where the fellowship "should be so deep that members function as one body," and when one member is suffering, the rest of the community should feel the pain of it also.

The church should also share in joy or the sorrow of the wounded.⁴²⁰ Do not expect the wounded and suffering to invite someone to come alongside them as they suffer; the church must take the initiative and approach them. The church must show the wounded that they care. Caring is action, not just good intentions. Caring occurs when good intentions manifest through loving – and appropriate – deeds. Appropriately fulfilling caring actions bring hope and encouragement to the sufferer.

Summary

Theodore Epp surmised that life begins and ends with pain.⁴²¹ People will experience suffering in different areas of life. Christians have the comfort of knowing they are not alone in their suffering. Scripture indicates that believers do suffer and that God may use suffering to bring about his redemptive plan. The Holy Spirit was a gift to humanity from God to be present when comfort is needed, to guide, to direct, to offer discipline as needed, and to provide peace when people experience turmoil in their lives.

420. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 31–32.

421. Epp, *Why Do Christians Suffer?*, 9.

Beginning in Genesis and continuing through to Revelation, Christians have been called to help people who are suffering. The church has continued this mandate through the centuries. However, in today's church, many ministries geared to helping the needy have been removed from the church and are now offered by secular agencies. The church needs to return to its calling of helping the widows, orphans, and suffering. Through the sincere caring actions of the body of Christ, believers and nonbelievers alike can experience the love, comfort, grace, and peace that the triune God offers.

CHAPTER FIVE: PROJECT APPLICATION

Synthesis of the Research into Practical Ministry

God calls men and women to become pastors, ministers, priests, or clergy. Following denominational protocols, pastors may be required to obtain specific preparation courses or educational degrees to be credentialed.⁴²² When comparing the Catholic, Lutheran, and Southern Baptist denominations' educational requirements, the median degree is a Master of Divinity. Pentecostal denominations, on the other hand, have less stringent educational requirements. Prospective pastors in the Assemblies of God (AG) must study a specific number of courses depending on the credential level desired. Global University courses meet the minimum requirements for credentialing in the AG.

Unless seminarians elect to take the pastoral counseling concentration, only a few courses are offered to prepare them to undertake pastoral counseling obligations. Most MDiv programs require one course on counseling and one elective that may include other counseling classes. Upon reviewing the course descriptions, most of the introductory counseling courses seem only to skim the surface of the counseling aspect of pastoral work. In addition to the inconsistent integration of counseling education in the MDiv programs, each counseling class offers vastly different content.

422 "Academic-Requirements-for-Credentialing.Pdf," accessed February 19, 2021, <https://ag4sc.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Academic-Requirements-for-Credentialing.pdf>; "Program: Master of Divinity - Saint Joseph's College: Online Programs - Acalog ACMSTM," accessed February 19, 2021, http://catalog.sjcme.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=36&poid=2860&returnto=1277; "Program: Biblical Counseling Track, MDiv - Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary - Acalog ACMSTM," accessed February 19, 2021, http://catalog.sebts.edu/preview_program.php?catoid=17&poid=3278&returnto=1815.

It is concerning that pastors are inconsistently prepared to cope with crises because they are expected to grow in the face of, and as a result of, their crises.⁴²³ As clergy face individual and corporate crises, the minimal training may not be sufficient to sustain them through the crisis. During crises, the pastor's actions will speak much louder than words because their congregation watches how their leader responds and reacts to crises.

Without a standard in grief care, American churches may experience a chasm between what they perceive to be the wants and needs of bereaved parents versus the expectations of parents who are grieving their child's death. The ministries and counseling offered through those churches may not be effectively meeting the needs of grieving parents. However, if pastors recognize the limitations in themselves, their churches, and their ministries, they can, in turn, promote "caring, need-fulfilling relationship[s]" that invites God to meet the bereaved in the "struggle with their humanness."⁴²⁴

The purpose of this project has been to develop a theology of suffering, grief, hope, and comfort through hermeneutical dissection of the Bible and interacting with experts in psychology, thanatology, and theology. The research outcome illuminated the need to adopt a standardized biblical theology of parental grief and guide grieving parents to seek God for comfort and hope as they struggle to accept their child's death. In turn, the need for more uniform guidelines in grief work resulted in creating a training manual entitled *Principles of Unconditional Compassion* (PUC).

423. Proffitt et al., "Judeo-Christian Clergy and Personal Crisis, 227.

424. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 7.

Because this theology is discussed from a kingdom perspective, persons from all denominations can utilize the PUC manual. The manual discusses the importance of faith in resolving grief and bringing freedom from the oppression of profound grief. The valuable points hidden within the manual will provide simple alternatives for the ministers to be like Jesus to the suffering, display love to them, listen to them, and care for them rather than merely repeating Bible verses.

PUC is designed for all groups and denominations for individual or group study and encourages interaction through relevant, fun activities. The manual is divided into two sections. The first section contains the theology developed during this research, and the second section discusses practical applications of the theology. The following topics are covered in the second section of the PUC manual and explanations provided represent a sampling of the research completed on that topic. The completed research on each section is provided in the attached appendices.

The grieving family

As people grow and change through life stages, their ability to understand and process grief also matures. People will inevitably face tragedies during their life; many of them will occur suddenly, without warning. Often, it is difficult for adults to accept and process their grief over the tragedy.

When equipped with how each age group relates to death, the comforter will effectively utilize age-appropriate explanations and comforting words. Children will go through the same processes as adults do. However, children face more challenges due to

their cognitive abilities, emotional stability, previous experience, and developmental stage.

For children to successfully navigate the grieving process, parents and other influential people in the child's life need to help them "face heartache, grieve productively, and learn important lessons" about life.⁴²⁵ Many parents will attempt to protect their children from the hurt and pain associated with grief and exclude them from death conversations. A child's religious beliefs can be beneficial when navigating loss and tragedy. The myriad of emotions elicited can strengthen faith and lessen the feeling of being helpless.⁴²⁶ Pray with the children and remind them that God loves them, has not failed them, and is still active and present in their life.⁴²⁷

Children also need to be encouraged to have friends that are believers. These friendships will remind them to remain faithful even during times of tragedy and that God has called them to do great things in His name.⁴²⁸ Faith has a way of building up a person and those who surround him or her.

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix A.

Communicating with the bereaved

This section aims to equip comforters with knowledge on reacting and interacting with the grieving individuals within a congregation. Comforters may unknowingly utilize

425. Brian Dollar, *Talk Now and Later: How to Lead Kids Through Life's Topics* (Springfield, MO: Salubris Resources, 2015), 85.

426. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 99.

427. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 98.

428. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 231.

inappropriate or cliché responses to a person's grief. However, having an awareness of appropriate and timely comforting measures will help the comforter avoid adding additional stress to the bereaved. Communication is vital to the nuclear family's survival; without it, the family will face obstacles that seem insurmountable. Communication often breakdowns down significantly within the family following a death. Couples often argue about the other person's grieving style which can lead to the dissolution of the marriage and can cause added stress on the children. Each person in the family will express their grief in different ways. What works for one person will not work for others in the family. While every person's situation and grief are incredibly individual and unique, practical actions can be utilized to help bereaved families with their grief.

Despite people's best intentions, telling a bereaved parent that they know how the bereaved parent feels is not reassuring. Unless that person has been through the same experience, there is no possible way that they can know what the bereaved is going through. However, as one experiences personal pain, that person may “simultaneously identify with what others feel and think, reaching out to them.”⁴²⁹ It is during this time of crisis and grief that humanity is strongly tempted to “identify his [or her] own limited perspective with universal truth.”⁴³⁰ Comforters can avoid this mistake by simply walking alongside someone in crisis and being an added strength and faith to the hurting person because “an empty vessel” needs to be filled by the “covenant mercies and faithfulness of

429. Harold Myra and Marshall Shelley, *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 187.

430. Ware, *Orthodox Way*, 262.

God in Christ."⁴³¹ Bereaved individuals will need to be reminded that "God is personal, holy, loving, suffering, dynamic, and relational."⁴³²

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix B.

Understanding the unseen impacts of grief.

In the wake of grief, some areas appear to be considered less important than recovering from grief's emotional effect. As noted in the section on grief, experts such as Kanel, Wright, Haugk, and Rando indicated that grief extends beyond the event of death into multiple areas of a person's life. These unseen inner conflicts may cause the bereaved to experience prolonged or unresolved grief.

Secondary losses occur immediately upon a death or loss occurrence but may take time to recognize their presence. Secondary losses are things that disappear after the initial event has occurred; for example, in a couple where one spouse works outside the home and the other spouse does not, the couple lives on a single income. Upon the death of the income-earning spouse, the other is suddenly left without financial stability. The surviving spouse may need to obtain employment for the first time in years. Returning to work may come with the additional expense of childcare if there are children in the home, resulting in feelings of guilt.

When a person goes through a crisis, trauma, loss, or suffering, changes may occur in different areas of their life. Friends and family relate to one another differently

431. Ford and Higton, *Theologian's Reader*, 100.

432. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 84.

during and after suffering. They may not know what to say or how to act, or they may distance themselves. Other people will draw closer. A person's interests, priorities, or goals change after a crisis, trauma, or loss, which may cause one to lose a connection to some friends and family members but may lead to new relationships and new friendships.

Terminal illness occurs when a death is imminent. The family will face a myriad of new trials. In addition to the stages of grief discussed previously, the family must now wade through the additional stages of crisis, unity, upheaval, resolution, and renewal.⁴³³

The family enters a crisis state when a child becomes ill and is diagnosed as terminal. Upheaval occurs when the patient enters remission or plateaus. As the terminally ill take a turn for the worse and approach the end of life, the family will enter a time of resolution, which will be the final acceptance of the disease that is stealing the life of their beloved child. When the time comes to say goodbye to the child, parents become very emotionally drained and may have already become financially drained. Renewal is the final stage in this series and begins with the child's funeral and continues until the family has regained their footing and accepted their newly defined roles within the family and the community.

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix C.

433. Barbara F Okun and Joseph Nowinski, *Saying Goodbye: How Families Can Find Renewal through Loss* (New York: Berkley Books, 2011).

The Circle of Love, a long-term support circle.

As noted in chapter two, Stroebe, Schut, and Rubin discussed the importance of community-supported holistic grief recovery. To experience forward momentum on their grief journey, the bereaved will need their community's support. Combining Koenig's assertion that religion plays a vital role in recovery with Stroebe's, Schut's, and Rubin's viewpoints creates space for biblically based holistic support for the suffering and grieving in churches and communities. As noted in the section on hope and comfort, Fretheim indicated that people are relational and need others to help them navigate their grief journeys. In the same section, Paulin noted that people who are guided in their grief release their harmful coping mechanisms and replace them with positive adaptation methods to the new normal of life.

In Scripture, Jesus said the mourning would be comforted, the Holy Spirit was sent to be an ever-present comforter, and Paul admonished the Romans to mourn with those who mourn. In keeping with these biblical admonitions, churches could institute a "crisis intervention team" which would address the needs that a family in crisis may encounter while trying to recover from the tragedy. With a single point of contact, this team can set a chain of events in motion designed to guide and support this family on the road to recovery and establish a "new normal" for their lives.

The circle of love targets five areas (peer, participation, prayer, provision, and practical acts) where the bereaved need the most significant support. As a peer, one would be an intentional friend who commits to responding to communication regardless of the day or time. Promoting participation could include offering to take the bereaved to church, bible studies, or other activities. Prayer partners would actively intercede for the

bereaved as they learn to balance their new lifestyle. The provision partners would meet specific financial needs such as a child's school costs, which are not categorized as benevolent needs. Practical acts could include caring for a widow's yard, helping a bereaved family with household chores, or offering childcare.

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix D.

Creating and hosting support groups.

As previously discussed, processing the emotions of grief is vital to accepting the reality of the situation and re-establishing a sense of normalcy in the life of a bereaved individual. Bereaved people usually seek someone to share their emotional and mental distress and may seek counseling that they must pay for out of pocket. Unless the counselor or therapist has experienced the same loss as the bereaved individual, the suffering people may not reach a resolution in their grief recovery.

Marrying Rando and Worden's processes with Stroebe and Schut's concept on community support, the creation of support groups would provide an environment conducive to developing community and emotional processing. Support groups provide a place where bereaved people can find others who have experienced the same type of loss as themselves. In this shared space, people may feel more accepted and freer to share their experiences openly without the culturally generated stigmas that may silence their pain.

In order to enable ministries to offer support groups, basic guidelines for hosting support groups are provided in this section. Churches can be a great source of comfort and help if both the professional ministers and the laity move out of their comfort zone

and increase their safe bubbles to include those around them who need a safe bubble.

Ongoing support is necessary for grieving people. Meeting with other people experiencing similar situations can provide helpful insights for their recovery and provide a safe space to express their feelings, concerns, frustrations, and deep grief.

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix E.

Creating Effective Ministry Teams

In addition to awareness of the theology and methodology of grief work, it is essential to assemble a team that will effectively guide the bereaved through grief and creating a new normal for themselves. The Bible outlines the qualities necessary for team members.

Lending voice to the biblical qualities includes leadership masters such as Steve Sample, Jim Collins, and Billy Graham.

This section aims to provide the biblical foundations of team building and will discuss the importance of having the right people in leadership positions to motivate and manage people. Collins wrote that it is vital to get the right people on the “bus” (team, or ministry), and the wrong people off the “bus,” before figuring out where to drive it.⁴³⁴

Collins posed the question: Can a leader fan the flames of personal passion and ignite “the passions of those around you?”⁴³⁵

To make a ministry successful, the team requires “disciplined people, who engage in disciplined thought, then take disciplined action.”⁴³⁶ Value in a ministry is added when

434. Collins, *Good to Great*, 42.

435. Collins, *Good to Great*, 109.

436. Collins, *Good to Great*, 153.

core values are attached to it. It does not matter what those values are, as long as they are present and built into the ministry's very fabric and are preserved as time passes.⁴³⁷ When selecting the individual(s) that will take on the responsibility of coordinating the circle of love around the wounded, it is crucial to look for someone with solid spiritual gifting in administration, leadership, and discernment.

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix F.

Self-Care

The spiritual discipline of caring (for others and self) is essential as it connects people together and people to God. Ministering to families and individuals who have experienced traumatic life events is an underdeveloped and underutilized ministry in the church world. Megan Devine says that "the way we deal with grief in our culture is broken."⁴³⁸ She follows that statement with the thought that "our cultural and professional ideas about what grief should look like keep us from caring for ourselves inside grief, and they keep us from being able to support those we love."⁴³⁹ She continues by saying that "grief is part of love. Love for life, love for self, love for others. What you are living, painful as it is, is love. And love is really hard. Excruciating at times."⁴⁴⁰ It is difficult to exist without loving others. People attempt to cut themselves off from hurt by turning off their love, which tends to leave them empty, broken, and angry.

437. Collins, *Good to Great*, 195.

438. Megan Devine and Mark Nepo, *It's OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand* (Boulder, Colorado: Sounds True, 2017), xv.

439. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That you are not OK*, xvii.

440. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That you are not OK*, 5.

Honoring grief includes identifying and allowing it to exist in the same space as joy and peace, not rushing, not sweeping it aside, not covering it up, and practicing kindness.⁴⁴¹ Devine was adamant that "kindness is self-care ... recognizing when you need to back off a bit ... [and] not letting your own mind beat you up. Self-kindness is seriously difficult."⁴⁴² Kindness to self is vital to grief recovery.

This section addresses the value of engaging in self-care, including sabbaticals and quiet time with God. Caretakers, ministers, and bereaved individuals often experience burnout, which results from a lack of attention paid to their physical, emotional, or spiritual needs. Through communion, worship, prayer, meditation, sabbaticals, and Sabbaths, one can be spiritually restored and avoid becoming burned out.

Hurting people need a support system that will pick up where others have left them still in need and will walk through the dark months after friends and family have gone back to work or moved on with their lives. Grieving people need a shoulder to lean on when their faith is faltering and their strength is gone. A ministry geared to bereaved individuals would be a practical, hands-on ministry that would involve a designated team of people willing to oversee special projects and be accountability partners. A partnership with the accountability partner will hopefully be a lasting relationship between the parties involved.

On the other side of ministering to hurting people, ministers must learn and value self-care. Far too often, ministers are the victims of moral failure and ministry burnout which may have been avoided if the minister employed self-care disciplines. Self-care

441. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That you are not OK*, 87.

442. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That you are not OK*, 113.

includes taking time to play and relax. Being stretched is not a bad thing, but constant stretching without a rest in between can cause lasting damage to a minister's health and spiritual well-being. Spending quality time with God and resting in the Holy Spirit's presence is the space where people acknowledge their human limits and recognize God's infiniteness.

Good leadership will include space for Sabbaths. It is in this space that leaders can ask difficult questions about the life and health of their organization, questions like: "Do I remain a part of this community where the way of life is killing me or do I leave in order to survive as a human being? What defense structures do I need to put in place to defend against the influence of this community rather than being able to lean into it and learn from it?"⁴⁴³ God will provide answers and direction if leaders are willing to spend time alone with God.

To read the remaining research, please refer to Appendix G.

Anticipated Outcomes

The PUC manual's anticipated outcomes are a uniform approach to grief work that addresses bereaved parents' needs holistically and is a critical component in training ministers at educational institutions to provide holistic grief work.

This doctoral research project has focused on developing a foundational theology that gives voice and context to the critical issues surrounding grief, death, hope, and comfort from a biblical perspective. By examining contemporary literature, experts in

443. Collins, *Good to Great*, 128.

psychology, thanatology, and counseling have extensively discussed methods of treatments to address the physical, emotional, and psychological needs of grieving individuals. Researchers such as Koenig are raising awareness of the connection between a person's overall health and spiritual well-being. Treatments addressing physical, emotional, and mental needs should be combined with addressing spiritual needs for bereaved individuals to recover from grief holistically. In order to provide holistic grief work guidelines, it was necessary to extrapolate the biblical foundations for grief work that addressed bereaved individuals' spiritual needs and led to identifying the following four goals.

Goal One

The first goal called for the development of a critical reflection on themes and topics throughout Scripture as they relate to grief, death, hope, and comfort to provide context and meaning.

This objective examined grief, suffering, hope, and comfort in Scripture, utilizing theologians and scholars to provide context and meaning. Through this research, it became apparent that many theologians connected grief and suffering to humanity's sins, whereas hope is found through salvation. Billheimer indicated that humanity would suffer until they come to salvation through Jesus Christ.⁴⁴⁴

When a person accepts salvation through believing in Jesus, they are justified by faith and sanctified through the ongoing process of faith-strengthening exercises. Jesus

444. Billheimer, *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*, 25.

himself connected to sin and suffering when he healed people, saying their sins were forgiven (i.e., Matt 9:1-8). However, Jesus also separated sin and suffering when he told his disciples, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life" (John 9:3).

Paulin wrote that bereaved individuals needed to receive God's grace, mercy, love, and acceptance.⁴⁴⁵ Poling and Graham identified those attributes as compassion.⁴⁴⁶ Jesus felt compassion for lost people and began to teach them (Matt 9:36; Mark 6:34). When Jesus had compassion on people, he followed through with an action. When Christians display the fruit of the spirit, bereaved individuals are exposed to God's love, which promotes hope. Hope is found in the promises of God that believers would not be abandoned and unaccompanied (Heb 13:5). It is within this promise of hope that believers can draw comfort.

When people experience grief and suffering, they can display God's goodness in their lives. Unfortunately, many people may not be equipped to allow God to work through their grief. Ministers and counselors have the unique opportunity to guide bereaved individuals through their circumstances by redirecting their focus from their clouded emotions to how God can utilize their suffering to bless other people. The PUC manual provides insight for appropriate Scripture and comforting measures to assist in the refocusing process. Sharing Scripture and reading materials can go either way with the bereaved individual. If one quotes verses too soon for the bereaved person, it may increase their pain. However, when appropriate and indicated, reciting God's word may

445. Paulin, "The Contemporary Church's Ministry," 65.

446. Poling, *Render unto God*, 234–236; Larry Kent Graham, "Pastoral Theology," 12.

bring great comfort. It will also be appropriate to assure the grief-stricken people of God's love because they may be struggling with their own faith and feelings about God.⁴⁴⁷

Goal Two

The second goal for this research called for a dialogue with experts and theologians in relation to God and humanity's interaction as grief, death, hope, and comfort are experienced.

This goal explored God and humanity's interactions as grief, death, hope, and comfort are experienced. As noted in the section on processing grief, psychologists have indicated that grief and suffering cause significant repercussions on a person's mental health. Kanel indicated that grief impacts a person's feelings, physical sensations, cognitions, and behaviors.⁴⁴⁸ Bonanno, Worden, Rubin, Lindeman, Bowlby, Kubler-Ross, Streobe, and Schut describe grief recovery as tasks that appear to be linear and intellectual in nature. In each expert's grief model, the bereaved individual is expected to perform mental tasks in order to come to terms with the death of a loved one. While these specific grief models address mental health issues, none of them mention supernatural hope, love, or God's presence as part of their recovery process. Secular grief work often misses the element of eternal hope and therefore does not provide holistic treatments that include the spiritual element.

447. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 99.

448. Kanel, *A Guide to Crisis Intervention*, 139–140.

Bereaved individuals often seek answers that secular agencies may not be equipped to address. One of the top questions asked by people who are suffering is "Why?" The follow-up question is usually along the lines of "How could a loving God allow this to happen?" Fretheim indicated that these questions stem from incorrect theology about God's character and may turn people away from God unless corrected.⁴⁴⁹ People will often have unanswered questions but may need to be taught how to respond to God with trust and faith. As noted previously in the discussion on Habakkuk, it is acceptable and welcomed for people to ask God the tough questions. Jesus, David, Jeremiah, and others asked God the "why" questions. Fretheim reminds readers that without this critical conversation with God, it can be harmful to the bereaved and others in their sphere of influence. However, by asking the questions, one can learn healthy responses to crises, how words or actions can cause others to suffer, and provide an opportunity to develop community.

As noted earlier through the discussion of religion and healing, there is a correlation between spiritual mindset and mental health. People who are suffering or grieving may require guidance in understanding or remembering God's unconditional love and that God knows their hearts and pain. The body of believers is ideally situated to display God's goodness to suffering individuals but may not feel adequately prepared to do so. The PUC manual introduces a circle of love, which offers suggestions to meet grieving people's needs through individual, corporate, and community collaboration as

449. Fretheim, *Creation Untamed*, 96.

well as utilizing prayer, provision, practical acts, peer relationships, and participation in activities.

The manual also includes helpful, healing responses instead of cliché answers that may cause additional hurt or pain to someone who is already suffering. Sometimes, the easiest and most appropriate way to support a bereaved family is to be silent. When Job's friends arrived to comfort him, they spent seven days in silence with him (Job 2:13). Although it may be challenging to accomplish, it is essential to be present when sitting with someone. It is important to practice being present in a society that is so easily distracted by electronics and social media. Being intentionally focused on being present sends a message to the person who is grieving that their well-being is essential. A lack of being present communicates the opposite.

Goal Three

The third goal led to the evaluation of characters in Scripture to determine God's actions and humanity's reactions to grief, death, hope, and comfort. This goal evaluated biblical characters to determine humanity's reaction and God's actions, as well as humanity's interaction with God concerning grief, death, hope, and comfort. God receives glory through the believer's faithfulness, integrity, and character.

God provides comfort, peace, and hope when suffering, and grieving people trust God to guide them through their circumstances. Genesis chapter sixteen contains the account of Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave, who suffered partly due to her circumstances and partly because of her attitude toward Sarah. Hagar had two encounters with God in

the wilderness, resulting in a hope that sustained her for over thirteen years. Hagar rested in the promise that her son would not die but become the father of many nations.

Throughout Joseph's history, God's favor rested on him even when his circumstances were less than favorable. Because he was faithful to God during his suffering, Joseph became the second most powerful man in Egypt and saved the Egyptians and the Israelites during a famine (Gen 39-50).

The account of Job is frequently utilized as the example of God's presence during suffering. Unbeknownst to Job, God invited Satan to test Job's faith. As each adverse circumstance occurred in Job's life, he refused to blame God. His faithfulness in the midst of suffering is rewarded with the restoration of all (plus additional blessings) that Satan had deprived him of in chapter one.

In Rizpah's story, God did not speak directly to her. After six months of protecting the bodies of her sons, King David's heart was filled with so much compassion that tradition and culture were set aside to give the men a proper burial. In this case, self-help manuals or intellectual reasoning would not have encouraged a resolution, but God made a way for Rizpah to be able to move forward with her life.

Habakkuk's suffering was because of his love and compassion for the Israelites. In his suffering, Habakkuk displayed great courage by questioning God about the judgment on his people. God responded to the questioning and explained why he was meting out that specific consequence. Habakkuk understood that the righteous would preserve if they were faithful to God. In the final chapter, Habakkuk's lament contained the acknowledgment of God's sovereignty.

Despite Isaiah's prophecy about the depth of suffering God's servant would endure, Jesus willingly left his place in heaven to dwell among humanity. From the moment Jesus was born, people tried to kill him. On one occasion, as Jesus prepared to go to Jerusalem, the disciples questioned the wisdom of the journey and reminded Jesus that people were trying to kill him. Jesus displayed great compassion for oppressed people and suffered immensely for their salvation.

After encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul experienced suffering at the hands of Christians. With the memories of Paul's persecution fresh on their minds, he may have felt rejection and persecution from the believers. However, as his relationship with God grew more intimate, Paul became bolder and more zealous in proclaiming the gospel everywhere he went. Despite the ongoing persecution, Paul suffered willingly. Regardless of what hardship Paul was facing, he continually encouraged others to maintain their faith and cling to the promises of God.

After analyzing these biblical characters, a theology of grief, suffering, hope, and comfort emerged, which was revealed in the fact that the more intimate the Christian's relationship is with God, the stronger their faith becomes. As faith grows, believers can endure suffering because they know it is only temporary, and God is their strength, peace, and joy.

Utilizing the PUC manual, the minister or counselor can highlight the biblical narratives, guiding the bereaved into a more intimate relationship with God through their suffering, and comforting them with the knowledge that God understands humanity's pain as demonstrated through these biblical characters.

Goal Four

The fourth goal guided the creation of a critical and foundational theology that will addresses the difficult questions and emotions experienced by grieving individuals and how to effectively minister to and to encourage grieving parents to remain with their congregation as they seek healing, comfort, and a deeper relationship with Jesus.

This goal created a critical and foundational theology that addresses the difficult questions and emotions experienced by grieving individuals and how to minister to them effectively. When a church body understands grieving people's emotional and spiritual needs, it can provide resources that encourage grieving parents to remain engaged with their congregation as they seek healing, comfort, and a deeper relationship with Jesus.

In this project, grief models from six prominent psychologists were studied. Despite the different perspectives, none of them offered eternal hope to the bereaved as part of their grief recovery plans. In this project, approximately seventy-five percent of the research on contemporary literature focused on grief and recovery through personal mindset and effort. In contrast, a mere twenty-five percent of the research revealed hope and comfort as a critical component of grief recovery.

Although there is an agreement that recovery is vital for people journeying through grief, a dissonance exists between contemporary literature and theology. The grief models studied focus on coming to terms with the circumstances that resulted in bereavement and recovering from those hardships through intellectual processing. In comparison, this theology refocuses the bereaved from dwelling on the circumstances surrounding grief to a biblical foundation of hope. When a person feels hopeful, the burden of grief seems lighter. Hope is not found through intellectualizing the situation but

through faith and trust in God. Although believers live with the hopeful expectation of life without struggles or tears, they can find hope in the middle of their struggles and trials.

The church can play a vital role in the recovery of grieving or suffering people. The PUC manual offers tools to equip people within the church so they will be able to provide bereaved individuals with the hope and comfort that is currently lacking through contemporary counseling. When caring for others, the comforter must slow down and not rush the grieving process. Every person experiences grief differently, and no person should dictate what someone feels or place unrealistic expectations on a bereaved individual.⁴⁵⁰ Too often, bereaved parents are expected to "quickly work through their grief and to move forward with their lives."⁴⁵¹ When people are rushed through the grieving process, they may develop adverse religious coping strategies such as blaming the devil, believing that the church abandoned them, and questioning God's love. The harmful coping mechanisms need to be converted into positive behaviors including "seeking God's love and care, asking for forgiveness," and finding meaning.⁴⁵²

Bereaved individuals may receive healing through the loving nature of companionship. Practical acts of compassion such as a visit, a phone call, a hug, a prayer, or small gestures will mean more than attempting to conquer their world. Trying to do everything for bereaved individuals can result in an unhealthy co-dependency. A

450. Amanda Thompson et al., "A Qualitative Study of Advice from Bereaved Parents and Siblings," *Journal of Social Work in End-of-Life and Palliative Care* 7, no. 2/3 (2011): 159.

451. Toller, "Bereaved Parents," 264.

452. Gila Frank, "Religious Coping and Perceived Stress in Emerging Adults" (Diss, Pepperdine University, 2014), 16, accessed October 31, 2016, <http://search.proquest.com/seu.idm.oclc.org/docview/1641126144/abstract/30A2372803EC4F75PQ/4>.

healthier approach would be to pick something to do with them and do it well, which would be the practical application of Paul's admonishment to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). It is not up to the comforter to move the bereaved individual from a place of suffering and grieving. Instead, the comforter must be present with them, reassuring the bereaved individual is not alone, which will help them create forward momentum on the grief recovery journey.

The church community can institute an interdependent communication system among ministries and small groups to create an accountability system where bereaved individuals are less likely to be overlooked. Ministry targeted explicitly toward the bereaved in a congregation will provide an atmosphere of acceptance and growth as people invest holistically in those who are suffering. Through God's peace and comfort, suffering people are strengthened, and their faith is stretched as they cling to God's hope. The edification of others is reflective of God's edification and his indwelling presence. Edification creates a relationship with the believers and harmony with the Holy Spirit, allowing the believers to walk in step with the Spirit and observe the miracles of transformation and regeneration.⁴⁵³ Restoration is available through "the power and love of Jesus Christ," in whom resides a "love that conquers sin and wipes out shame and heals wounds, and reconciles enemies and patches broken dreams and ultimately changes the world, one life at a time."⁴⁵⁴ In the midst of the restoration process, Jesus partners with humanity in order to care for those whose dignity had been trampled on and bridge

453. Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 111.

454. Bill Hybels, *Courageous Leadership* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 21.

the gap in their relationship with God.⁴⁵⁵ God promised to bring hope and comfort to people as they exercise faith. By focusing on their spiritual health, sufferers can point others to God. This hope can only manifest itself through the power of God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Project

The uniqueness of this project is both a strength and a weakness. Within the Pentecostal context of congregational care, little is directly written about the subject of parental grief and loss. However, an abundance of Scripture narratives makes the reality of parental grief clearer. Therefore, this project could be well received by the intended target audience or dismissed as a radical theology.

This project can be used as an evangelism tool to show bereaved people there is hope despite their current circumstances. Grieving people do not need to remain despondent but can walk in the joy of the Lord.

This work was not designed as an exhaustive tome cornering all nuances of grief, death, comfort, and hope that is taking place in the lives of all. The reasons that people would be mourning over children vary greatly. As a result, the amount of research required to address each subject would surpass this project's available timeline. Future research should be conducted to address the specific needs of each group of parents grieving the loss of a child based on the individual circumstances.

455. Opoku Onyinah, "Pentecostal Healing Communities," in *Toward a Pentecostal Ecclesiology: The Church and the Fivefold Gospel*, ed. John Christopher Thomas (Cleveland, Tennessee: CPT Press, 2010), 209.

Another weakness that surfaces from this project is the narrowness of the scope of focus. While this project drilled into the issue of grieving parents who have lost a child, much broader issues of grief and loss exists in multiple areas.

Many parishioners are facing grief and loss in multiple ways. For instance, older Christians face the death of a spouse. Young mothers and fathers face the issues of miscarriage and the seeming inability to conceive. Still, many also face losses of their health, their careers, their belongings, and their youth, to name a few. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it does show that a theology of grief should be expounded upon and considered an essential doctrine that every disciple of Christ must face.

For this reason, Jesus clearly stated in John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world, you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

The Project's Effectiveness

This research project intends to be a resource for pastors to be better equipped to minister to bereaved individuals in a more holistic manner. In some churches, the laity is underutilized. However, with training, this ministry's opportunity would not fall solely on the leader but on a group of equipped and educated individuals operating as a team. To train leaders and laity within churches to be prepared for the demands that may be placed on them, leaders must be willing to acknowledge the reality and necessity of a properly functioning bereavement ministry. Once the need for bereavement ministry is recognized, training and support should be offered to those who minister in their congregations and community.

The PUC possesses the DNA of the theology identified in this research and will be a tool that can be utilized in small group settings or as a training guide for those interested in griefwork ministries. The PUC will be a tool that can be utilized to prepare anyone working with grief by providing information on child death and how it impacts the family.

While the effectiveness of the implementation of the PUC cannot be determined at this time, the need for such a ministry has been demonstrated in this research. Implementing this curriculum into willing churches that have acknowledged both the need and their lack of preparedness may result in a healthier approach than the present state of denial and avoidance. Future implementation and feedback may help demonstrate PUC's impact and may also result in the development of more areas of felt need in grief and loss. Without a doubt, the theology of grief, suffering, hope, and comfort is demonstrated in Scripture's narrative and is therefore essential to the Father's heart. As such, it should be an equal priority to the ministries of local churches who are joining Jesus in his mission to "bind up the brokenhearted" (Isa 61:1).

CHAPTER SIX: PROJECT CONCLUSION

In addition to the Great Commission, pastors are admonished to care for their congregation. In the last chapter of John's Gospel, Peter was asked three times if he loved Jesus. With each affirmation, Jesus admonished Peter to care for his sheep (John 21:15-17). Peter, representing future generations of pastors, became a shepherd to the flock in addition to his role as a fisher of men. Just as Peter was to care for the flock as an expression of his love for Jesus, ministers in today's churches are also called to be a shepherd to their flock.

King David, a career shepherd before his kingship, penned a Psalm reflecting a shepherd's duties.

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside quiet waters. He restores my soul; He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Ps 23:1-4).

When grieving people approach the church for guidance, they should be protected as a shepherd would protect the sheep. Pastors who are unprepared for the shepherding role within their churches are doing a disservice to their congregation. Hurting people will recover quicker and become stronger if their spiritual needs are met in conjunction with their physical needs.

After the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, many churches ceased in-person services and group meetings. The move to an online church or parking lot church was an effort to continue sharing the Gospel with congregations. These changes lead to the question: "Has the church become more business-oriented than

shepherd-oriented?" Shepherding a congregation includes more than creating converts and collecting tithes and offerings, both of which are mandates from God. Good shepherding entails taking care of the sheep and feeding the sheep. Four months into the pandemic, the Center for Disease Control surveyed five thousand, four hundred and seventy people. Almost forty-one percent of the respondents indicated they were suffering from adverse mental or behavioral health conditions, and ten percent had contemplated suicide.⁴⁵⁶

Due to the increase in the number of people suffering from mental distress, pastors who are taking care of their flock should be reaching out to those who are suffering. This involvement with the congregation would alleviate some of the distress caused by physical isolation. Despite the various government mandates regarding social distancing and closures, new converts need to be in fellowship with mature Christians in order to grow spiritually. The discontinuation of Bible studies, small group meetings, and other fellowship-related gatherings has reduced the levels of discipleship offered by churches. Mature Christians still need each other to maintain accountability and bring exhortation to each other.

Another task of shepherding is to feed the flock. Feeding America, the largest hunger-relief organization in the United States, reports over thirteen million "non-elderly" adults have received free meals or groceries for the first time.⁴⁵⁷ In light of the biblical

456. Mark É. Czeisler, "Mental Health, Substance Use, and Suicidal Ideation During the COVID-19 Pandemic — United States, June 24–30, 2020," *MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 69 (2020), accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6932a1.htm>.

457. Ash Slupski, "Pandemic Unemployment and Food Banks | Feeding America," *Feeding America*, last modified March 18, 2021, accessed March 21, 2021, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-blog/pandemic-unemployment-food-banks>.

mandate to take care of widows and orphans, many churches across the nation have stepped in to offer free groceries to their community. However, many of the elderly may not be able to drive to the food distribution sites and cannot restock their pantries.

Hospital chaplains may have seen an increase in older Americans being admitted who are malnourished or found several days after a medical emergency because visitation with the shut-ins has decreased.

As mental health issues and food shortages increase during this time of forced isolation, congregations need more care than in previous years. During the research for this project, bereaved individuals articulated emotional, physical, and spiritual needs that were not being met through the church as expected. The PUC manual contains helpful information to prepare ministers for the role of shepherding their church and protecting the sheep as they face life's trials. When the church becomes aware of a need, many things can be done to care for the widows and orphans in each congregation need even during social distancing and closures. The "Circle of Love," as presented in the PUC manual, was developed to assist shepherds in meeting the top five needs of grieving people: prayer, provision, participation, peer presence, and practical acts.

Lessons Learned

It was astonishing to learn that a low percentage of the population seeks guidance when dealing with grief or trauma. As noted in chapter two, the research uncovered that only about five percent of the population seek guidance when grieved and only twenty-five percent of bereaved mothers seek support. In the hospital, a patient's pain and suffering cannot be hidden behind loose-fitting clothing, make-up, hairstyle, or a bright smile.

Hospital chaplains have the unique opportunity to meet people in moments of raw suffering and offer them encouragement, comfort, and prayer. While chaplains may only see a patient once, their congregation and pastor will need to pick up the baton of restoration that may have begun in the hospital room.

During this project, the researcher was introduced to grief model therapies developed by some leading psychologists. The grief models presented linear and intellectual approaches to grief recovery and revealed how grief work involves more than dealing with grief's emotional ramifications as outlined by Kubler-Ross. Before compiling this research, the stages of grief were utilized as the primary focus of grief counseling and helping people understand what they are experiencing. The expanded knowledge and understanding of psychosocial therapies will guide people as they accept the change that death brings and understand that they cannot pretend that life will be the same as before the loss. Additionally, effective equipping will allow a greater understanding of where the bereaved may be on their grief journey and augment that journey with the supernatural hope missing intellectual and linear therapy models.

Despite the volume of material available in contemporary literature addressing grief, supernatural hope is not considered a critical part of grief recovery. The secular counseling programs focus on self-reflection and intellectualizing grief. However, Christians have the Holy Spirit's added support and the hope of eternal life, which comforts the bereaved individual and sustains them through life's hardships. Every time a chaplain enters a patient's room, there is an opportunity to present the Gospel. While proselytization is not permitted at the hospital, there are no restrictions on how to pray. Every prayer offered on a patient's behalf consists of the offer of supernatural hope and

salvation. Many patients are grateful for the encouragement offered through the visitation and proffered prayers.

Since the early nineteen hundreds, an individual's death has become more about a comfortable end for the sick and less of a family experience. Many palliative care patients remain in the hospital or are placed in hospice houses. Not only do hospital chaplains encounter ill patients, but they are also often faced with terminal patients that may be entering hospice care or minutes from death. Palliative care patients may be surrounded by their family, in which case the family as a whole becomes the patient. As patients near the end of their earthly journey, the family may need reassurance that the patient will enter heaven. In death, there is hope. The soul of a person is eternal and will live on even though the physical body dies. American culture no longer embraces death as a family ritual but pushes it out of sight. The disconnect present can be seen as daily interactions with patients and families occur.

When compiling the theology engagement with Scripture and theologians, many personal experiences were affirmed. Moltmann indicated that hope, which begins with salvation, is futuristic and contemporary. Hope grows through a person's faith and prevailing over suffering, not through their salvation. Salvation, being a one-time event, opens the gate to developing an intimate and personal relationship with God. Christians cannot become Christlike without suffering because they must deny their sinful human nature. Through this research, the focus of attention was redirected from personal and clouded emotions to spiritual health. As personal spiritual health grows, an urgency to spread hope and comfort arises and permeates all areas of life.

While selecting biblical figures to engage with, it was necessary to delve into the outcome of their suffering. The characters had to display hope that God was greater than their suffering and strength of character and perseverance as they overcame their circumstances. Personal healing is often found in the process of helping others navigate their grief because it takes the focus off themselves and onto someone else. Through this project, personal healing was realized with the anticipation that those who read this dissertation would receive their healing and share their journey with others. As patient visitation occurs, the opportunity often arises to share a testimony of how suffering and hope have changed me. Each time a testimony is shared, boldness to share increases, creating a cycle of building up others and self.

Life and death are part of the circle of life. Humanity's rejection of God's commands has resulted in individuals suffering the consequences of their actions, as Paul reminded the Galatians that humans reap what they sow (Gal 6:7). Hall surmised that humanity's suffering arose from loneliness, human limitations, sin, and anxiety. Cain was the first person to intentionally commit a crime against another human, which inflicted suffering on his parents, Adam and Eve. Suffering people may hold on to their pain like a close friend, leading to repeated incidents of victimization. God may allow people to suffer as discipline, to bring growth in someone's faith, or to bring about his redemptive purposes. God wants believers to place their hope in him instead of the hurtful things of life, so God's compassion, love, and guidance shine brightly through them. In focusing on bringing hope to the patients, God's glory is able to shine through and reach the deep dark places of hurting people.

Abraham saw Hagar's suffering and chose not to get involved. Perhaps Abraham's actions were driven by a fear of getting hurt or becoming legally responsible for the outcome. From personal experience, some churches continue to follow Abraham's lead and do not get involved with the bereaved parents. It is unclear why people do not engage with those who are grieving. When the expectation of finding hope and comfort from one's church and fellow congregants is not met, feelings such as loneliness, despair, rejection, and being unworthy to remain a part of that congregation arise. However, those negative feelings have been counteracted through the support provided by professors along this educational journey. Holistic affirmations have bolstered the concept that participation in this conversation has been welcomed and encouraged. The freedom to voice an opinion without rejection has alleviated the depression and despair that has been endured for many years.

Habakkuk reminds readers that God does not ignore his people when they lament and ask God why? God is with his children at all times, and although the path is often painful, it is necessary to allow God's glory to shine through. Frustration with injustice, wrongful suffering, destruction, violence, strife, and conflict should provide people with the desire to do something about it. Asking the follow-up question of what one will do about personal suffering or others' suffering may create a helpful future vision. The personal journey through this frustration has led to the desire and determination to bring voice to the elephant in the room. Having had experience with perceived rejection from others may not have been a reflection of my person but of other people's lack of understanding of suffering and how God works through that suffering. Completing this

research and preparing a training manual has allowed space to be the engine on the freight train of normalizing grief and encouraging lamenting for Christians.

Rizpah and Job's friends went against their cultural norms to engage in suffering. Rizpah wanted closure for her circumstances, and Job's friends wanted to be supportive of their friend. Jesus promised to comfort those who mourn and send the Holy Spirit to give them strength and hope. The Holy Spirit was a gift to humanity from God to be present when comfort is needed, to guide, to direct, to offer discipline as needed, and to provide peace when people experience turmoil in their lives. As Christians emulate Christ's response to suffering, they ought not to feel abandoned. The believer's reward comes through persevering and remaining focused on God and pursuing his will for their life. This educational journey has been the result of pursuing God's will. Beginning with a bachelor's degree, pursuing a master of Divinity degree, and culminating with this doctoral degree, God has orchestrated each step. As doors have been opened to arrive at this place, it is guaranteed that God will lead the next chapter also, whatever that may be.

Through prayer, worship, and trusting him, God provides strength to endure; healing in physical, emotional, and spiritual areas; and the constant presence of peace and comfort. Consoling others may provide positive and encouraging interaction to the bereaved. Studies have determined that grieving people who have some degree of religious belief recover from their bereavement sooner than those without a faith background. Visiting patients provides an opportunity to remind them of God's love without the pressure of religious constraints. The ability to interact with all denominations, including atheism, creates the opportunity to engage in thought-

provoking conversations about a person's faith and challenge a lack of faith, which increases personal faith.

Limitations

At the beginning of this project, the intention was to engage pastors and leaders to determine the viability of researching a perceived gap between what ministries and help are offered by churches and the needs of grieving parents as experienced by the researcher personally. The researcher experienced hesitation from those who were approached to participate in the research. While there were no explanations offered for the ministers' reluctance, it became apparent that they were not prepared to engage in conversations with this research regarding grief ministry. Many of the pastors and leaders approached personally knew the researcher's personal experience with grief and may not have wanted to open a wound that was still healing.

Another limitation was the lack of self-confidence, which led to the research's insufficient promotion. As the years passed since the researcher's child's death, several naysayers have rejected the concept birthed through this experience. However, God-given vision would not be silenced and continued to grow. As this project was developed, the researcher scheduled a meeting with the lead pastor and was informed that although a grief support ministry was a great idea, it was not part of the church's vision.

As previously discussed, the amount of available theological resources presented a challenge in compiling the biblical foundation for grief, suffering, hope, and comfort.

Recommendations

As this project recalibrated from the original intention, it was discovered that many pastors are not prepared to deal with the level of counsel grieving parents need to receive. Pastors may not engage in conversations regarding grief because they may not want to induce additional pain on the bereaved individual. They may have unresolved grief in their personal lives or may even feel there is nothing they can do for the grieving person. Regardless of the reason, pastors should become more comfortable with the subject of grief and the grief experienced from a child's death. For ministers who engage in pastoral care, training could be provided to prepare them for griefwork. As pastors study grief theology, they may receive personal healing in conjunction with being increasingly involved with the conversations revolving around grief.

In the course of ministering to grieving parents, pastors may be called to the hospital or residence to pray with the sick, provide encouragement, or engage in end-of-life discussions with distressed families. When ministers are well-grounded in griefwork, they will be more effective as they minister to those who are suffering. The PUC manual will provide a springboard in preparing ministers to minister to bereaved individuals, enter a sickroom, and engage in conversations involving the tough why? questions. A training course utilizing the PUC manual is being developed in collaboration with other chaplains to equip pastors to be more effective in their ministry to their hospitalized, home-bound, and terminally ill congregants. Participation in this course would benefit all pastors regardless of their role in a church or para ministry.

Future Studies

In the secular counseling arena, grief and PTSD are considered problematic in the American culture today and provide resources that focus on the broad spectrum of grief. There are limited resources available to help guide people through death's various causes from a biblical perspective. To continue providing counseling and spiritual guidance for those suffering from grief associated with the death of parents, spouse, or siblings, a biblical foundation will need to be developed. The church has an evangelistic responsibility to be part of the conversation on mental health as the congregations that enter each church are not immune to experiencing grief or PTSD.

For people who have experienced a loved one's death due to homicide, suicide, terminal illness, accidental death, vehicular collision, or natural disaster, available counseling resources are limited and may not address people holistically. The church can play a vital role in encouraging and strengthen people who are suffering from trauma-related circumstances. In light of the limited resources available, the question needs to be asked if the amount of pastoral care training for ministers is sufficient for what they will face in the daily duties as a pastor. Pastors who are willing to upgrade their counseling skills to meet the increasing need for holistic grief and mental health counseling could utilize the PUC manual to augment their toolbox of resources.

The loss of a child due to parental rights termination, divorce, incarceration, adoption, or fostering complicates the situation. The birth parents may feel remorse for the situation leading up to the loss of their child and struggle with those decisions for many years. While the child or children are still living, the parents may no longer have contact with them. Guidelines should be created to holistically counsel the birth parents, including

forgiveness of self, the people or agency responsible for removing the child, and the parents who are now raising said child. The new family may need counseling as they adjust to the presence of a new child. As sibling order and roles change with someone new, children may need help adjusting to the changes. Biblically-based holistic approaches are needed to guide the children through these transitions effectively.

Future Considerations

Many churches do not boast large congregations. Small congregations usually mean there are only a few people to perform many tasks. Griefwork cannot be performed effectively by people burning out through their involvement in various church responsibilities. It appears that there is a lack of cooperation between churches within the same denomination. Without that cooperation within and between denominations, bereaved individuals are left bereft of genuine spiritual care. Perhaps the time has come to blur the denominational lines and band together as a community of believers to offer a well-rounded and holistic grief ministry.

As noted earlier, there is a lack of consistency in the number of counseling training courses ministers receive. While introductory counseling courses are required, the number of topics to be covered does not permit time to delve deeply into the various counseling segments. Ministers may not be equipped with the tools to guide people through their grief effectively. In addition to preparing future pastors to prepare and deliver sermons and conduct the business involved with leading a church, seminaries and colleges should include mandatory training on grief counseling. Regardless of a pastor's position in the church, no pastor is immune from suffering and grief, but all pastors can

bring comfort and hope. The PUC manual provides a uniform theology for pastors that encompasses secular and biblical viewpoints and appropriate holistic responses when faced with grief situations.

Impact on Life and Ministry

In the aftermath of a child's death, the researcher's personal experience revealed a gap between the need for holistic spiritually-based support and the availability of such resources from the local church. People, including the local church, may be unaware of such a gap until support is required. When a congregant experiences a child's death, their spiritual support system may not be prepared to offer the support and guidance required. The church's insufficient preparation to minister to grieving people became the "elephant in the room" for the researcher and needed to be discussed.

During this project, the researcher was exposed to multiple models of grief therapy. The process of learning about secular treatments revealed a lack of continuity between secular and Christian counseling, which reinforced the researcher's determination to create guidelines to encourage consistent support for bereaved individuals needing guidance along the path of grief. People consist of a body, a mind, and a soul. When there is a dysfunction in one area, the other areas suffer also. A person suffers holistically and should be treated holistically, not in segregated parts.

In preparing the section on religion and healing, awareness was raised about the importance of meeting people at their lowest point. According to the research, people heal faster and recover from grief quicker when they are spiritually uplifted. As a hospital chaplain, it is interesting to watch a patient's demeanor change when they are prayed for

and encouraged. Patients and families who transition to palliative care express gratitude when they receive prayer and reminders of God's promises to them.

One benefit of writing this dissertation, personal healing was experienced. The research and writing process has allowed space to express grief and resolve some emotions connected to a grief experience. The second benefit of this writing process has been the growth of self-confidence. Through this committee's patience and direction, there was substantial encouragement to engage in conversations with theologians and experts and allow my voice to be heard.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Effects of Grief on the Family



During intense mourning and grieving, family, friends, and fellow congregants may withdraw their support. Still, a sound support system with proper communication should strengthen a family and ease their pain.¹ A grieving family will encounter unwanted changes in everyone's roles, relationships, and identities.² For example, if a mother dies, the oldest daughter often takes on the family's mothering role. She cooks, cleans, takes care of younger siblings, and tries to ease the grieving father's overall burden. Losing a parent tends to lead to a longing for "a particular person for whom there is no substitute."³ If a child dies, siblings tend to overcompensate and attempt to replace the lost child for their parents or make up for the grief they feel. However, parents are usually too wrapped up in their grief and cannot tend to their living children's needs.⁴ Surviving children need to know that they are loved and needed as they are and need not attempt to become someone they are not, including a replacement for the deceased sibling.

Children in single-parent homes endure the pain of loss due to divorce and being separated from their other parents and siblings. Often, parents (who may have never lived together or may have divorced) are so involved in hurting and hating each other that they tend to forget the emotional turmoil that the children are suffering. Children in blended families face unique challenges when it comes to supporting and communicating during the grieving process.

1. Pernilla Avelin et al., "Adolescents' Experiences of Having a Stillborn Half-Sibling," *Death Studies* 38, no. 9 (October 2014): 560.

2. Avelin et al., "Adolescents' Experience," 561.

3. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 97.

4. Avelin et al., "Adolescents' Experience," 561.

When a loss occurs in blended families, the children often find themselves experiencing grief, and at the same time, outside and not fully participating in the grief because they do not reside full time with the grieving half of their family.⁵ Children who are shuffled between homes need to feel like they are part of the grieving process and not shunned from the family that is not grieving. For example, James and Susan have divorced. Both have remarried. Ben is their son, and custody is split fifty-fifty. James and his new wife become pregnant and then lose the baby. They are grieving the loss of the baby. Susan and her husband are sad for them but not grieving. Ben is in limbo. When he is with James, he feels the burden of the grief and mourns the loss of his half-sibling. When Ben is with Susan, life is very different. Ben may think that he is not allowed to experience his grief when he is there. Ben is torn. He cannot stand outside the grief as Susan can but cannot fully grieve as James does. Susan would need to permit Ben to grieve even though she is not grieving, and James should include Ben in the process of mourning, burial, and grieving his deceased sibling.

Regardless of the circumstances that have created the void in people's lives, everyone will have to process their grief over the loss in order to live the abundant life that we were designed to live. Processing grief does not mean that one will "get over" the loss but accepting the facts and reconcile their feelings to their new reality. People will grieve for the rest of their lives. They do not have to live in the deep, dark places of grief but may revisit their grief from time to time and need to learn how, what, and when to grieve and do so appropriately.⁶ People who have not experienced loss or grief are often uncertain how to help others, but when ministering to people who are suffering or grieving, it is essential to remember that no two people will process the events and emotions in the same manner, nor in the same timeframe.⁷ Grief is complex, but it is necessary to walk alongside the grieving, shouldering their burden and lending them a portion of faith until they are strong enough to stand on their own.

People may be traumatized when they lose a loved one to homicide because it is sudden and unexpected.⁸ This type of loss may inhibit an adolescent's "efforts to construct meaning in the face of this loss" and may experience distresses in the form of "hyperarousal, affect-laden memories and images, and avoidance."⁹ Traumatic death and the resulting "distress from the separation" will often "affect the course of the grieving process."¹⁰ Survivors will need time to accept the finality of the separation. Still, they may get stuck in the denial stage because of the depth of the shock of the trauma.

Traumatic grief is compounded when the victim of the homicide is a child.¹¹ "Parental grief" creates a lifetime challenge that mixes memories of the child with the ongoing reminders of the loss of dreams for the child and usual landmarks (like

5. Avelin et al., "Adolescents' Experience," 560.

6. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 45.

7. Moore and Moore, "The Family," 285.

8. Johnson, "African-American Teen Girls," 121.

9. Johnson, "African-American Teen Girls," 125.

10. Johnson, "African-American Teen Girls," 126.

11. Nancy J. Keesee, Joseph M. Currier, and Robert A. Neimeyer, "Predictors of Grief Following the Death of One's Child: The Contribution of Finding Meaning," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 64, no. 10 (October 2008): 1156.

graduations, weddings, grandchildren) that will not be celebrated.¹² Maternal grief is “particularly intense and lengthy” and is “experienced as a narcissistic assault because parental attachment consists of both object-love and self-love.”¹³ This deep attachment causes mothers to react in ways that others may not understand. A mother who has lost her child has lost a part of herself, all her hopes and dreams for that child, and the opportunity to experience all the natural life events that other mothers are privileged to participate in as their child grows.

Children and Grief

People will inevitably face tragedies during their life; many of them will occur suddenly, without warning. Often, it is difficult for adults to accept and process their grief over the tragedy. Children will go through the same processes as adults do. Still, there are more challenges due to their cognitive abilities, emotional stability, previous experience, and developmental stage in life.

For children to successfully navigate the grieving process, parents and other influential people in the child’s life need to help them “face heartache, grieve productively, and learn important lessons” about life.¹⁴ Many parents will attempt to protect their children from the hurt and pain associated with grief. They may exclude them from conversations about death. This exclusion denies the children their right to mourn, which can lead to isolation, impeding their “recovery process” and “ultimately does not protect them.”¹⁵ When denied the opportunity to mourn appropriately, children can feel “guilt and remorse” and confused about why their parents are sad (especially if the situation had nothing to do with them).¹⁶ These feelings may result in unacceptable behaviors while they seek the same sense of security they previously felt.

When discussing difficult circumstances with children, be honest and provide explanations at an age-appropriate level. Lying to children could “short-circuit the healing process” and prevent the acquisition of “effective coping strategies for future tragedies and losses.”¹⁷ Parents should provide their children with stability and security through routines, teaching them about the circle of life and allowing them the freedom to “express how they feel,” including crying and showing anger and frustration.¹⁸ When parents fall short in these areas, children are more vulnerable to “distortion and

12. Joan Arnold and Penelope Buschman Gemma, “The Continuing Process of Parental Grief,” *Death Studies* 32, no. 7 (August 2008): 672.

13. Carole A. Winston, “African American Grandmothers Parenting AIDS Orphans: Concomitant Grief and Loss,” *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 73, no. 1 (January 2003): 91.

14. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 85.

15. Alexis Ann Schoen, Megan Burgoyne, and Sharon Faith Schoen, “Are the Developmental Needs of Children in America Adequately Addressed during the Grief Process?,” *Journal of Instructional Psychology* 31, no. 2 (June 2004): 143.

16. Clarissa A. Willis, “The Grieving Process in Children: Strategies for Understanding, Educating, and Reconciling Children’s Perceptions of Death,” *Early Childhood Education Journal* 29, no. 4 (June 2002): 222.

17. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 88.

18. Schoen, Burgoyne, and Schoen, “Development Needs of Children,” 147.

disinformation” about the situation and will begin to believe that they cannot trust “the person who was supposed to tell him [or her] the truth-even the hard truth.”¹⁹ When faced with the truth, children will develop a strength that they nor their parents realized was within them.

Adults often make a tragedy worse by projecting their fears onto the children and overexposing them to the situation through the media or conversations. Too much information will be overwhelming and instill fear for their safety. Have an honest discussion with the children about the tragedy and allow them to see the parents’ emotions because it permits them to feel sad, scared, and upset.²⁰ Creating an environment of awareness, openness, and real emotions while balancing the desire to protect children is a delicate balance and will require intentional actions on the parents’ part.

A safe environment for children will allow space for them to ask questions.²¹ Children will experience many unfamiliar and uncomfortable emotions, including shock, anger, bodily stress, confusion, guilt, anxiety, fear, sadness, and isolation. They will need to express their emotions but are often told to stop or to “suck it up” because the adults/parents are uncomfortable and may feel threatened by any display of emotions.²² Denying or stuffing emotions compounds loss and does not allow people to “feel the full depth of their pain and emotions.” While it may seem overwhelming, “the pain gradually subsides, and joy returns.”²³ Emotions are not something to be dictated by another.

Crying is an integral part of the healing process but can make a person feel out of control. When honest conversations about pain and tears occur, children perceive their parents as “more approachable, understanding, and compassionate.”²⁴ Expecting children to cry when the parents think it is appropriate (or to be silent when it is not) is not grieving but a performance. Children may take this expectation to the extreme and have an outburst of crying, anger, or disobedience when they feel it is expected that they are on their best behavior.²⁵ When children are taught healthy ways of expressing grief, they will know that it is normal to cry and eventually dialogue about the loss.²⁶ Allow children to grieve in their way, be supportive, allow them time and space to grieve without expectations of what is and is not appropriate displays of emotions at any given time, and offer gentle, loving correction if the behavior is dangerous to themselves or others.

Children need boundaries and routines to keep them safe and on task. The consistency and predictability of daily routines can provide a reassuring structure when tragedy strikes.²⁷ Even with good boundaries and practices, expect some regressive

19. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 87.

20. Donna Schuurman, “Talking with Children about Tragic Events,” *The Dougy Center*, accessed April 8, 2017, <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/talking-with-children-about-tragic-events/>.

21. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 90.

22. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 96.

23. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 92.

24. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 93.

25. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 97.

26. Willis, “The Grieving Process in Children,” 222.

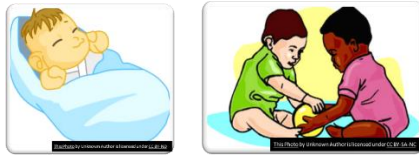
27. “Fears and Halloween,” *The Dougy Center*, accessed April 13, 2017, <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/fears-and-halloween/>.

behaviors including demanding more attention from adults, wishing for the deceased to return, feeling anxious when a family member is late or away, poor schoolwork and attendance, changes in sleeping and eating, fears of common illnesses,” and regressive behaviors (loss of bowel and bladder control, temper tantrums).²⁸

Another emotion that children (and adults) must confront is guilt. Survivor guilt happens when a person feels guilty for surviving when another has died and stems from feeling helpless like one should have said or done something different to prevent the tragedy. Dealing with survivor guilt is part of the grieving process, and children will need more time than adults to “sort through all the emotions, and to learn valuable lessons about love and life.”²⁹ Once children can accept nothing that could be done, they must be encouraged to forgive themselves for being helpless and reengage in life.

A child’s religious beliefs can be beneficial when navigating loss and tragedy. The myriad of emotions elicited can strengthen faith and lessen the feeling of being helpless.³⁰ Pray with the children and remind them that God loves them, has not failed them, and is still active and present in their life.³¹ Children also need to be encouraged to have friends that are believers. These friendships will remind them to remain faithful even during times of tragedy and that God has called them to do great things in His name.³² Faith has a way of building up a person and those who surround him or her.

Children up to 2 years



Children in this age bracket: do not understand death; do not have words for their feelings; are aware of the absence of a loved one; notice changes in their routine; and notices the emotions of those around them.³³ Infants learn to communicate by mimicking the feelings and actions of their parents. Without understanding death, an infant will instinctively seek the one who died and miss the contact, sound, smell, and sight of the loved one.³⁴ Even though they cannot communicate their emotions, infants will feel the

28. “A Guide to Children’s Grief, Loss, & Healing,” accessed April 8, 2017, <https://www.everystep.org/files/images/Grief%20and%20Loss/ATP%20Childrens%20Guide%20to%20Grief.pdf>.

29. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 100.

30. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 99.

31. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 98.

32. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 231.

33. “Navigating Children’s Grief: How to Help Following a Death,” *Child Grief*, accessed April 13, 2017, <http://childgrief.org/childgrief.htm>.

34. A Penny, “How Do Children Grieve?,” *Community Care*, no. 1734 (August 7, 2008): 18.

loss of their loved ones and may feel longing, anxiety, and fear of abandonment.³⁵ Children this young can feel a sense of abandonment and wonder what they did that caused them to be left behind and why the deceased stopped loving them enough to stay, even if they could not articulate these feelings.

During times of grief, parents may withdraw their usual amount of attention devoted to the child; combined with their own grief, children may unintentionally become “non-compliant” or display “acting-out” and regressive behaviors.³⁶ Behaviors that result from trauma could include crying, sickliness, indigestion, thrashing, rocking, throwing, sucking, biting, or sleeplessness.³⁷ Infants do not understand why they feel this way, and adults should be patient with them.

Helping a child who is non-verbal requires physical contact, cuddling, reassurance, gentleness, and patience. Infants should maintain their routines, have their immediate physical needs met, and be included in the mourning process.³⁸ Infants do not understand what is happening in their world and rely on their caregivers for cues and reassurances.

Children 3 to 5 years old



Pre-schoolers do not understand the permanence of death and think of death as temporary and reversible, like going on a trip or going to sleeping; they may wonder what a person does when they are dead; can understand that biological processes have ceased, and may wonder what would happen if their caregiver dies.³⁹ Pre-school children think in “concrete terms (what they can see or touch).” They may not understand what is happening during the funeral process and why their loved one is lying in a box and not waiting for them at home.⁴⁰ Pre-schoolers ask a multitude of questions but using “euphemisms such as ‘we have lost Daddy’ can confuse them,” and they may spend their

35. P.G. White, “Experiencing the Death of a Sibling as a Child,” *The Sibling Connection-- Counseling, Support and Healing Resources for Grieving Sisters and Brothers*, accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.counselingstlouis.net/child.html>.

36. Willis, “The Grieving Process in Children,” 222.

37. “Navigating Children’s Grief.”

38. “Navigating Children’s Grief.”

39. “Navigating Children’s Grief.”

40. White, “Experiencing as a Child.”

time looking for daddy or whoever has died.⁴¹ Parents or caregivers will need to give truthful and straightforward answers to the child's questions and listen to their concerns.

These children can identify emotions and will need to process, which includes fear, sadness, insecurity, confusion, anger, irritability, worry, and guilt.⁴² Negative behaviors may consist of regressive behaviors, repetitive questions, withdrawal, intense dreams, physical ailments, crying, fighting, pretending the death did not occur, fascination with dead things, and role-playing death, change, and feelings.⁴³ Young children are considered "pre-operational." In this stage, children have short attention spans, and require "physical, comforting touch" to calm them, stability, routine, and a "warm and caring environment."⁴⁴ Other ways to help children in this age group include: allowing the child to regress; encourage them to play and have fun; allow safe ways to express feelings; answer repeated questions; let the child cry; talk, and include the child in family rituals and mourning.⁴⁵ Children need to be allowed to be children, play, be encouraged, and be comforted. This time of adjustment is also an excellent time to introduce or reinforce religious beliefs. Engage in prayer with the child and remind them of God's love and presence in their lives.

Children 6 to 8 years old



As children enter this age group, they have learned a bit more about death through watching television and nature and through other people's conversations. However, they do not possess the skills to process complex ideas like the finality of death.⁴⁶ Elementary school-aged children are capable of understanding the finality of death. As they become aware of their bodies, the children may become curious about how it feels to die and may become upset if they "assume that the death was painful."⁴⁷ Children may think that death is associated with bodily harm, mutilation, and decay. Those associations may lead the child to believe that death is scary, associate it with skeletons and ghosts, and think they can hide from it (like hiding in a closet or under the bed).⁴⁸

41. Penny, "How Do Children Grieve."

42. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

43. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

44. Schoen, Burgoyne, and Schoen, "Development Needs of Children," 147.

45. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

46. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 27.

47. Schoen, Burgoyne, and Schoen, "Development Needs of Children," 146.

48. White, "Experiencing as a Child."

Children are in a learning stage and question everything around them, and death is something they will need to learn repeatedly before the ‘lessons’ stay with them.⁴⁹ Parents will need to continually remind the children that, unlike the cartoons, death is final. Without a miracle, the deceased will not return.⁵⁰ Parents will need to use the children’s questions to guide how much information to divulge using “age-appropriate, concrete, specific terms and concepts” to answer the questions.⁵¹ As the children mature and their understanding increases, they will have questions about mortality and vulnerability and wonder, “what if that happens to me?”⁵² Other concepts that arise during this age range include: death is a punishment, wondering who would care for them if their primary caregiver dies, and thinks about what life will be like without the deceased’s attendance during life’s milestones (graduation, marriage).⁵³

Young children are still primarily selfish at this age and engage in make-believe. Children may feel their anger can kill others or that they are the cause of events surrounding them.⁵⁴ If the child has wished someone was dead, they may blame themselves for the death and feel extreme guilt.⁵⁵ Other emotions children in this age group may experience include: sadness, anger, loneliness, withdrawal, worry, anxiety, irritation, confusion, shame, and fear.⁵⁶ Children will need reassurances that these emotions are normal, and they can get through to the other side of them. Encouraging them to develop their faith and spiritual concepts will also help them process emotions.

Expected behaviors for this age group could include: regressive behaviors, specific questioning about details of death, acting as if the death did not occur, hiding their feelings, withdrawal, nightmares and sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, drastic changes in grades at school, aggressive acting out, and becoming overprotective of surviving loved ones.⁵⁷

Because of their limited understanding and vocabulary, children may isolate themselves or engage in “hostile play” when there is sadness in the home, or they cannot articulate their thoughts and feelings.⁵⁸ Guiding children through their grief requires a lot of patience and understanding from their caregivers. Suggested ways to help include: allowing the child to regress and express their feelings without ridicule or judgment, providing physical contact, be intentional about spending time together, answer questions truthfully, be aware of their confusion, provide physical and verbal outlets (drawing, reading, playing, art, music, dance, acting, sports), find a support group for their age, work with their school to adjust workload, and let the child choose how involved they want to be in the mourning and death processes.⁵⁹ Children are resilient and will bounce

49. White, "Experiencing as a Child."

50. Willis, "The Grieving Process in Children," 223.

51. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 27.

52. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 91.

53. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

54. White, "Experiencing as a Child."

55. Willis, "The Grieving Process in Children," 223.

56. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

57. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

58. Schoen, Burgoyne, and Schoen, "Development Needs of Children," 146.

59. "Navigating Children's Grief: How to Help Following a Death."

back, but they will only do so if they are lovingly guided through the process of grief and change.

Children 9 to 12 years old



Children in this age category understand death's finality and realize it is permanent, and everyone will die someday. Children may deny the occurrence of the death, think about what the future would look like with the deceased (graduation, marriage), wonder what will happen to them if their caregiver dies, and may still believe that their words or actions somehow lead to the death of their loved one.⁶⁰ They are more aware of the long-term impact of the death of a loved one. Because of this awareness and their increased maturity, many parents mistakenly talk to their children more openly than is appropriate for their age.

Emotions experienced during this age group include shock, sadness, anger, confusion, loneliness, fear and vulnerability, worry, guilt, isolation, abandonment, anxiety, and maybe a heightened emotional state due to physical changes occurring in their bodies.⁶¹ Children will often mourn through acting out their feelings by misbehaving and trying to get attention, which may lead to feeling guilty when they become adults.⁶² When a child experiences death, they may cry and be involved with the grief and mourning process but may seek attention from anyone in order to fill the void left in their life.⁶³ A child's inexperience with loss requires each encounter to become lessons in what loss feels like and how to put it into their context.⁶⁴ They may respond to these new emotions and feelings by sleeping, wanting to play, and not mourning with everyone else, but parents need to remember that this is more to do with age than the deceased.

Other expected behaviors from this age group include social and academic regression, fluctuating moods, hiding feelings, internalizing grief, "angry outbursts, irritability, sleeping and eating disorders, persistent questioning about the details of the death, fear of personal fallibility, hypochondria, shock, intense guilt, feelings of powerlessness, a façade of independence," withdrawal, and difficulty concentrating.⁶⁵ Children will also begin to feel different from their friends after a death and will need to

60. White, "Experiencing as a Child."

61. Ibid.

62. White, "Experiencing as a Child."

63. Willis, "The Grieving Process in Children," 223.

64. White, "Experiencing as a Child."

65. Schoen, Burgoyne, and Schoen, "Developmental Needs of Children," 145.

be reassured what they are feeling is normal and will not last forever, but will need to be worked through.

Children should be allowed to display their regressive behavior and to be comforted. Parents and teachers should expect mood swings and encourage them to draw, write, and role play as methods of expressing and processing their feelings.⁶⁶ Age-appropriate support groups will help them adjust and re-engage with their peers. Children will need to have someone to talk to and answer their questions about death, to have the choice on their level of involvement in the death and mourning process, and have someone to offer them physical contact and comfort.

Adolescents



Adolescence is a naturally challenging time of testing boundaries and figuring out who they are independent of their parents and family, but when grief is added to the mixture, a completely new layer appears for them to navigate. The loss or grief experienced is not individualized but seen in “the context of a family,” and while attempting to make sense of the death, they were not prepared for it.⁶⁷ Adolescents’ concepts and beliefs include the following: understanding of the universality and finality of death; denial; thinks about life’s milestones without the deceased; have a high awareness of death; may sense own impending death; thinks their words, thoughts, or actions caused the death; be conflicted between independence and wanting to remain dependent, and need to be in control of their feelings and afraid of appearing weak if emotions are revealed.⁶⁸

Their feelings are heightened and may include shock, anger, confusion, loneliness, fear, vulnerability, worry, guilt, isolation, abandonment, anxiety, and self-consciousness of being different. Adolescents may feel the weight of guilt if a parent dies during this stage of life. Without that parent to show them how to navigate the challenges of life and grief, they may “become confused and uneasy about their own feelings and behaviors.”⁶⁹ Some lessons remain untaught by the parents, and the adolescent may engage in risky behaviors, withdraw, or over-involved themselves as methods of coping with the loss.⁷⁰ When discussing death with an adolescent, be open and honest with them, speak with

66. Schoen, Burgoyne, and Schoen, “Developmental Needs of Children,” 145.

67. Avelin et al., “Adolescents’ Experience,” 558.

68. “Navigating Children’s Grief: How to Help Following a Death.”

69. Opalewski, *Adolescent Grief*, 21.

70. Penny, “How Do Children Grieve.”

love and wisdom, and understand that “every topic is fair game, and all questions should be honored.”⁷¹

The Doughy foundation compiled a “Bill of Rights” for the grieving teenager giving them latitude in the following points:

- To know the truth about the death, the deceased, and the circumstances.
- To have questions answered honestly.
- To be heard with dignity and respect.
- To be silent and not tell you her/his grief emotions and thoughts.
- To not agree with your perceptions and conclusions.
- To see the person who died and the place of the death.
- To grieve any way she/he wants without hurting oneself or others.
- To feel all the feelings and to think all the thoughts of his/her own unique grief.
- To not have to follow the “Stages of Grief” as outlined in a high school health book.
- To grieve in one’s own unique, individual way without censorship.
- To be angry at death, at the person who died, at God, at self, and at others.
- To have his/her own theological and philosophical beliefs about life and death.
- To be involved in the decisions about the rituals related to death.
- To not be taken advantage of in this vulnerable mourning condition and circumstances.
- To have guilt about how he/she could have intervened to stop the death.⁷²

Adolescents need to feel like they are not being treated like young children, and though they may struggle with their naturally occurring changes, they still have emotional, mental, and spiritual needs that have to be met.

Behaviors that tend to arise for teenagers at this time include occasional regressive behaviors, mood swings, hiding feelings, pretends death did not occur, role confusion, aggressive behaviors, withdrawal, nightmares and sleep disturbances, difficulty concentrating, changes in academics, impulsive and risky behaviors, change in friends, fighting, screaming, arguing, and changes in eating habits. Adolescents need their friends, but they may feel isolated and different. Parents need to be vigilant, watch for these changes, and encourage them to process their grief in healthy ways.⁷³ Adolescent need to be reminded that they should not expect their friends to behave in any specific way as they are already dealing with typical adolescent problems, which include:

resistance and difficulty in communicating with adults, being overly concerned with acceptance by peers (especially if the death was a suicide), and friends who either don’t know what to say or are afraid of saying the wrong thing, so they say nothing at all. It is easy for the adolescent to perceive that his friends don’t care.

71. Dollar, *Talk Now*, 28.

72. “Bill of Rights for Teens,” *The Dougy Center*, accessed April 13, 2017, <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/bill-of-rights/>.

73. Penny, “How Do Children Grieve.”

Alienation may take place [and the grieving adolescent may] feel all alone to face emotional pain... [the grieving adolescent may experience] the loss of friends... [the grieving adolescent may experience] rage fantasies... [the grieving adolescent will need to] determine the difference between feeling rage and acting upon it [and] find appropriate ways to express anger and rage.”⁷⁴

Adolescents may have a difficult time controlling their emotions, thoughts, and physical feelings, which can lead them to feel out of control and maybe overwhelming or frightening to some teens.

Parents will need to help them accept their new reality and how to process their emotions and thoughts. Ways to help them process include: allowing regressive behaviors and offer comfort; expect and accept mood swings; allow their emotions to be private unless there is a risk of harm; be available to talk and listen; answers questions truthfully; share feelings of grief with them; offer physical contact; allow choices about involvement with death and mourning process; encourage talking with trusted friends, journaling, creating art, and expressing emotion rather than holding it inside; and encourage mentorship with understanding adults.⁷⁵

College Age



As people enter adulthood, their experiences in life will shape how they handle their grief. If a person has reached this age without experiencing trauma or loss, they would be considered to be very blessed. After high school graduation, the once-popular students are now unknown, and they may experience a loss as they adjust to their new role as college freshmen. With the stress of post-secondary education, entering a career, or transitioning into committed relationships, having unresolved grief can cause breakdowns and leave the person unprepared for the everyday disappointments and circumstances they will face. After experiencing the loss of a loved one, adults may feel a sense of “unreality, or a feeling of living in a surreal world,” but must deal with their grief and carry on. The stress of their grief added to the stress of papers and deadlines makes the availability of drugs, alcohol, sexual encounters, and other new experiences

74. Opalewski, *Adolescent Grief*, 21.

75. “How to Help a Grieving Teen,” *The Dougy Center*, accessed April 8, 2017, <https://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/how-to-help-a-grieving-teen/>.

attractive.⁷⁶ Unless college students can effectively process their grief, they could stand to lose their current semester and possibly drop out altogether.

Adults



By the time adults have graduated college, they have experienced much grief. It may not be related to a loved one's death but could include natural event occurrences and friendship loss. Once a loss is experienced, people feel abandoned by society, grief and sadness are not validated, and they do not receive the “support necessary to heal,” so they repress their feelings, resulting in depression and substance abuse. People who have felt the sting of grief are more compassionate to others when they experience loss but must be careful not to carry it too far. Grieving people can project their hurt onto others, which is counter-productive, or become compulsive caregivers, not taking care of themselves and becoming ‘empty, over-stressed, and ultimately clinically depressed.’⁷⁷ As with any other stage in life, having good friends and creative outlets for grief and pain go a long way in assisting in the healing process.

76. P.G. White, “Experiencing the Death of a Sibling as an Adolescent,” *The Sibling Connection--Counseling, Support and Healing Resources for Grieving Sisters and Brothers*, accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.counselingstlouis.net/page13.html>.

77. P.G. White, “Loss of an Adult Sibling,” *The Sibling Connection--Counseling, Support and Healing Resources for Grieving Sisters and Brothers*, accessed April 8, 2017, <http://www.counselingstlouis.net/page22.html>.

Mature Adults



People in this group have felt the sting of trauma, loss, suffering, and grieving. Naturally occurring life circumstances may have occurred more often to some than to others. Perhaps they have lost their child (young or adult), siblings, friends, parents, or even spouses. Compound grief is widespread at this age. Many people do not spend a great deal of time pondering compound grief, but grandparents experience a double portion of grief. They watched helplessly as their beloved grandchild is buried, and their child entered a dark pit that they could not pull her out of. Over the years, the pain over their grandchild's loss will fade somewhat, but their pain over their daughter's life is now constant and fresh every day, which must be worse than having the finality of death.

Appendix B

Communicating with the Bereaved

The Art of Communication

Communication is vital to the nuclear family's survival; without it, the family will face obstacles that seem insurmountable. There is often a significant breakdown in communication among the family following a death. Many times, they argue over the way the other is grieving and can lead to the dissolution of the marriage, which can cause added stress on the children. Each person in the family will express their grief in different ways. What works for one person will not work for others in the family. While every person's situation and grief are incredibly individual and unique, some practical ways are common ways that bereaved families can utilize to help with their grief.

Despite people's best intentions, telling someone, they know how a bereaved parent feels is not reassuring. Unless that person has been through the same experience, there is no possible way that they can know what the bereaved is going through. "We experience our own pain but simultaneously identify with what others feel and think, reaching out to them."⁷⁸ It is during this time of crisis and grief that humanity is strongly tempted to "identify his [or her] own limited perspective with universal truth."⁷⁹ Misinformed theology can be resolved by simply having someone that is not in crisis come alongside them and be added strength and faith to the hurting person because "an empty vessel" needs to be filled by the covenant mercies and faithfulness of God in Christ."⁸⁰ They will need to be reminded that "God is personal, holy, loving, suffering, dynamic, and relational."⁸¹

With so much depending on the art of communication amongst the suffering and grieving, leaders must understand that their "choices of vocabulary, metaphors, syntax, phraseology, and patterns of speech" have a "high probability of resonating with their followers."⁸² On one level, "communication gives and receives information and discusses points of view." On a different level, communication "goes much deeper than words" and creates relationships in which the feelings of being heard and understood are fostered.⁸³ When people in crisis do not feel they are being heard, they will build walls and stop sharing, which will lead to frustration and isolation.⁸⁴ A comforter must not inadvertently humiliate the wounded unless they intend to make a lifetime enemy or cause them to turn away from God.⁸⁵

In the case of a death, some people will avoid visiting the bereaved until they have all the details first, so they know what to say and will not look foolish in their

78. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 187.

79. Ware, *Orthodox Way*, 262.

80. Ford and Higton, *Theologian's Reader*, 100.

81. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 84.

82. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 59.

83. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 19.

84. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 22.

85. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 99.

comfort efforts. However, the more the grieving is permitted to talk through the death, the better it is. Having someone nearby alleviates the loneliness.⁸⁶ Everyone who suffers and grieves “must grieve their loss and express their resentful sadness about what was and now is not and will never be again.”⁸⁷

Active Listening



When working with people who are suffering or grieving, a necessary skill is active listening.⁸⁸ When a person is active listening, it is crucial that they do not form an opinion about an important matter until all the relevant facts and arguments have been heard or until circumstances force the listener to form an opinion without recourse to all the facts.⁸⁹ This skill is an “excellent means of acquiring new ideas and gathering and assessing information.”⁹⁰ Asking “relevant and probing questions” can help determine if the wounded are being truthful or flippant and can create an atmosphere of accountability in their recovery cycle.⁹¹ It will also be the key to “provide safety, to understand, and to clarify” the event that has occurred.⁹²

To participate in active listening, the listener runs the “risk of being misunderstood” by the wounded and can mistakenly take your sympathetic ear as permission for them to act a certain way.⁹³ Listening carefully from the beginning to what is being said and knowing when to stop listening can save much turmoil.⁹⁴ Careful listening can “provide unexpected leverage” in accountability and assisting the wounded as time passes.⁹⁵ When listening, stay flexible with the speaker, ask for more details, and be aware of changes in tone or emotion to help the wounded process their situation, which will help everyone understand the goals and contribute to the successful completion of those goals.⁹⁶ Asking open-ended questions invites the hurting person to reflect, feel, and share more deeply.

86. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 164–165.

87. Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 135.

88. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 36.

89. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 7–8.

90. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 21.

91. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 28.

92. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 93.

93. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 29.

94. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 31.

95. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 33.

96. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 53.

What is going on?
Is something bothering you?
You seem to be tearing up?
You seem touched?
You seem really upset and angry.
This must be tough for you.
Tell me what is going on.

The wounded person may use tears to avoid conversation or situations because it has been effective in the past, but they are essential and are part of the healing process.⁹⁷ Provide an environment where they can calm down, think in safety, and be able to change their minds (even grow).⁹⁸

When listening to a wounded person talk, do not talk, interrupt or agree as it may distract the wounded and takes the focus off their situation, and places it on whatever was said. The only times that interrupting is beneficial is when they are stuck in a rut blaming someone for their troubles or clarification is needed, then redirect the conversation back to where it was. As rapport is built, the listener may feel compelled to offer advice, but that urge should be resisted as it may “put others down and implies they can’t solve their problems as well as we can.”⁹⁹

Active Listening Activity



The active listener needs to provide an atmosphere that encourages and empowers the wounded to open up and vent their feelings, keep things confidential, remove distractions so the speaker can focus, and assess what is essential to “move toward change, and put energy into creative living.”¹⁰⁰ The listener should make an effort to understand where the wounded is coming from, what concerns them, and why they do what they do and be engaged (see it, hear it, taste it, touch it, feel it, reflect it, and respect it) with the speaker.

97. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 162–164.

98. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 94.

99. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 102–106.

100. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 94–95.

Although the listener may have a different perspective on the situation, clarify thoughts that may help fine-tune the wounded's position and develop. When clarifying, repeat what they said and use the same words, phrasing, and intonations. This empowering technique is effortless and effective in showing gaps in thoughts and opens them to new thoughts, options and actions.¹⁰¹ Sometimes it will be necessary to paraphrase for the wounded to name their feelings and situation, which aids in making the situation less scary helps clear the emotions and brain function. By displaying patience, the wounded can often discover what they are thinking by talking out loud.¹⁰² To show acknowledgment of a thought or idea, use words, tone, and body language to indicate it is okay for the wounded to feel or think the way the talker does and helps them accept themselves and feel real support.¹⁰³ Do not argue about the talker's feelings.¹⁰⁴

Feelings are never right or wrong; they just are, and everyone has a right to feel.

Activity



When engaging in conversation with someone who is suffering or grieving, they may tear up or come to all-out sobbing. Tears may be from happiness, sadness, irritation, anger, frustration, excitement, or the tension of a deeply personal situation. Gently acknowledge the tears and ask them what the tears represent.

101. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 128–130.

102. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 96–98.

103. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 127–128.

104. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 130–132.



To avoid ritual listening, do not dwell on a thought or wait for the wounded to breathe to tell a story. If thoughts or questions arise, the listener should write them down to avoid being distracted trying to remember them. Good questions can open the wounded's pent-up thoughts and emotions and leads to the beginning of healing. As non-professional counselors, it is essential that the listeners curb curiosity, not grill the speaker with many questions as if on trial, and avoid asking "why?" because it sounds judgmental and will put the wounded on the defensive as negative questions breed negative answers.¹⁰⁵ Avoid "I understand," which means you are not listening, uncomfortable with a topic, or do not want to talk about it, shuts off the conversation. Finally, avoid interjecting with "Yes, but" as it creates arguments.¹⁰⁶

Avoid "Comforting" Mistakes



Unfortunately, during challenging and traumatizing times, people will often use clichés in an attempt to express sympathy to grieving family members. Nothing can compare to the magnitude of feelings and changes that families face when the "natural" cycle of life is out of order and parents are forced to bury their children and not the other way around. Without realizing it, well-meaning people may, and often do, inflict additional pain upon the bereaved when stating: "God needed another angel." "It was God's will." "He is better off where he is now." "He is fully healed now." Statements like these do not show support but display a person's inability to cope with suffering and death. When a loved one dies, and people know the deceased was a believer or the family

105. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 92.

106. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 116–123.

believes, comments flow around the death's positive aspects. A bereaved parent, who is receiving these types of comments, will often become defensive.

Do not gloss over or minimize or trivialize the suffering.

The grieving individual deeply needs acknowledgment that the suffering is real and significant. Although they may know this deep in their hearts and mind, they are not thinking clearly enough to process that. Their emotions are taking over, and everything is received at face value.

They are in a better place.

What was wrong with my home? Wasn't I taking care of them?

They are no longer in pain.

True, but not really comforting at this point in time. Wait for them to say this.

They lived a good long life.

Yes, but I still needed them.

They were ready to go.

But I was not ready for them to go.

The person is now with Jesus.

Hard to argue with that unless the person does not believe in Heaven or that the child accepted the gift of salvation.

Do not try to reassure them of God's love when they are angry.

It may have the opposite effect and drive people further from God. The bereaved will cry out (often silently) and ask, "Why?", "Why my child?" "It is so unfair" or even "Why couldn't God choose another?" When they are asking questions like this, it is essential to validate their questions but do not defend God.

Do not attempt to console if uncomfortable with the reality of the situation.

When someone is uncomfortable with facing another's pain and suffering, he or she may propose an alternative view of the situation, but it will come across as an unwillingness to acknowledge and accept the reality of the suffering that is being recognized and shared.¹⁰⁷

It will get better.

How do you know?

It must have been God's will.

Are you God? How do you know his will for my life?

God needed another angel.

God does not need angels. He can create them if he needs them. Humanity does not become angels upon death. At the second coming of Christ, the deceased's bodies will rise to be joined to their souls and will be glorified.

God does not make mistakes.

Does this mean that I deserved this?

107. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 120.

God has a plan. Just trust him.

I do trust God, but I am not thinking clearly enough to process this. I cannot trust him while I am mad at him.

*God does not give you more
then you can bear.
Time heals all wounds.*

I wish he did not trust me so much. Why does he think I can handle this? I am not strong enough. Actually, no, it does not. The pain may diminish, but it will never go away.

Everything will be all right.

How do you know? Are you God? Can you tell the future?

I will pray for you.

Please do not say this unless you really mean it. In fact, if you mean this, then stop right then and pray for them, so you do not forget.

Just have faith.

Wait, you mean all this time I have not had faith? I have been a Christian for # of years. Why can't I have your level of faith?

It is for the best.

How do you know what is best? Best for whom? Me? You?

It is a blessing.

Really? Show me where the blessing is?

You are young. You will__ again.

How do you know? What if it was a struggle to get this far?

You will make new friends.

Why? What was wrong with the ones I already have? Do you disapprove of them?

You will be fine.

That may be true, but right now, I do not feel fine.

“Hurting people do not appreciate being told that they are strong. They need time and opportunity to be weak, perhaps letting someone else be strong now. Sometimes they need permission to be weak, not forced to be strong.”¹⁰⁸

Do not try to cheer them up.

Using humor may backfire and cause more stress and make them feel worse than they did before. Bereaved individuals may feel like they are being told to get over it. “If I leave and this hurting person is not more cheerful than when I walked in, then I have failed.”¹⁰⁹ Allow humor to develop naturally.

Keep a stiff upper lip.

What does this even mean? Are you telling me I am not allowed to cry?

You should/should not...

What makes you an expert on my life? The only thing that should be said is that they should wait to make significant decisions.

Get over it.

Do you have any idea what has made me this way?

108. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 121.

109. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 41.

You will get over it in no time! Do you understand that how I handle this is influenced not only by how my life history has shaped my perception of the pain but also by the severity of the events leading up to the suffering?¹¹⁰

Do not compare personal experiences with someone else's.

This is not a competition where a person needs to prove they have had a tougher life or circumstances. Unless one has personally experienced their circumstances, there is no possible way to know what they are going through. The loss of a child is unlike any other type of loss, and nothing can compare to it.

I know how you feel.
before?

Do you really? Have you experienced this

I know what you are going through.

Have you been with me in this circumstance and the events leading up to it the whole time? Are you a mind reader?

I had the same thing; it was not that bad.

It sounds like you are saying that you had a cold, and my life circumstances do not count. Did you have the exact same circumstances?

*There are other people worse
then you.*

Really? Name one. Do you know them *Off* personally? show me how my pain is less than theirs?

Appropriate Comforting Methods

COMFORT



Sometimes, all a family in crisis needs in the way of words is expressions of love, and be reminded that “God is personal, holy, loving, suffering, dynamic, and relational.”¹¹¹ The easiest and most appropriate way to support a bereaved family is to be supportive in a silent way. When Job’s friends arrived to comfort him, they spent seven days in silence with him. Although it may be challenging to accomplish, it is crucial to be present with someone when sitting with someone. Please do not sit next to them and play on electronics; think about missing the game or what the next activity is on the agenda. They will perceive this and end the visitation.

110. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 41.

111. Archer, *The Gospel Revisited*, 84.

Simply reminding a person, they are being prayed for that there is a listening ear if they want to talk and allowing them space to process their grief is much more helpful than offering unsolicited advice that may add to their grief. If a promise is made to promise to pray for them, then follow through. Set a reminder to stop and pray for them or write it on a calendar.

Be a supportive community “of honest sadness, naming the losses.”¹¹² Once the wounded give voice to their sadness and suffering, the community can begin its work of lifting the wounded out of their pit.¹¹³

Celebrate

Celebrating victories with a hurting person is quite different from forcing celebrations onto a suffering individual. Discover what victory they want to celebrate. Hurting people see themselves as broken and another whole. Glossing over, denial, or minimizing the painful reality reinforces this painful perception.¹¹⁴ Sometimes, a victory is as simple as getting dressed or leaving the house; other times, laughing for the first time in a long time and feel it deep in their spirit.



Party Favor

We must celebrate even the most minor victories as an encouragement to continue their healing. Edification of others is reflective of God’s edification and his indwelling and creates a relationship with the believers and a harmony with the Holy Spirit, which allows the believers to walk in step with the Spirit and observe the miracles of transformation and regeneration.¹¹⁵ This restoration is available through “the power and love of Jesus Christ,” in whom resides a “love that conquers sin and wipes out shame and heals wounds, and reconciles enemies and patches broken dreams and ultimately changes the world, one life at a time.”¹¹⁶ In the midst of the restoration process, Jesus partners with humanity in order to care for those whose dignity had been trampled on and bridge the gap in their relationship with God.¹¹⁷

Encourage their healing through small steps if the suffering people have expressed the need to make changes. Quick changes can cause setbacks in their healing

112. Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 135.

113. Brueggemann, *The Word Militant*, 136.

114. Haugk, *Don’t Sing Songs*, 123.

115. Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 111.

116. Hybels, *Courageous Leadership*, 21.

117. Onyinah, “Pentecostal Healing Communities,” 209.

because they may not have been fully ready to deal with the consequences of it. People need to receive comfort, encouragement, and affirmation of their strengths and prayer to help them stay on track to a new balance in their lives.¹¹⁸ Regardless of how trauma or crisis is resolved, getting back into the ‘land of the living’ can be challenging.

Have Empathy

To have empathy is to show concern for the wounded but not pushing them toward the conclusion. Empathy is free from condemnation, judgment, comparisons and is full of encouragement and understanding. Examples of appropriate comforting statements include:

“I/We are praying for you.”

“I am so sorry for your loss.”

“Is there anything I can do to help you with?”

“I am sorry to hear about...”

“You have been on my mind a lot lately.”

“This must be so difficult for you.”

“It hurts to know that you are going through this.”

“Our hearts go out to you.”

“I know you are hurting, and I wish I could be there.”

“We are deeply saddened by the news ...”

“My heart broke when I heard that...”

“The news of your suffering knocked the breath out of us.”

“I wish I could take your pain away.”

Healing can stem from the loving nature of companionship.

A visit, a phone call, a hug, a prayer, or small gestures will mean more than attempting to conquer their world. Do not try to do everything for them, but pick something to do and do it well.

Pitch a tent next to them.

When a person is suffering or grieving, it is not anyone’s place to move them from that place. Take cues from them and simply be present in the pit with them. Camp next to them and reassure them they are not alone.

118. Clinton and Hawkins, *Biblical Counseling*, 250.



It is our natural tendency to want to rush through negative emotions and proceed on to happier emotions. When caring for others, we must slow down and do not rush the process. Every person experiences grief differently, and no person should dictate what someone feels or place unrealistic expectations on a bereaved individual.¹¹⁹ Too often, bereaved parents are expected to “quickly work through their grief and to move forward with their lives.”¹²⁰

The resulting negative religious coping strategies (including blaming the devil, believing that the church abandoned them, and questioning God’s love) need to be turned around into positive behaviors that include “seeking God’s love and care, asking for forgiveness,” and finding meaning.¹²¹ By slowing down, the person suffering can adjust to life as it is in the aftermath of the crisis. When we attempt to rush them, they can feel unheard, unloved, and unsafe. People need an environment they feel safe to bare their soul and share their deepest hurts and desires.

Develop new skills.

Depending on the circumstances, it may be necessary to develop a new skill set. The wounded will try to stay busy in an attempt to prevent themselves from dwelling on their situation. If this is the case, encourage them to do something productive instead of mindless activity. Encourage them to try different experiences new activities and expand their horizons.

Encourage small steps.

If the wounded has expressed the need to make changes, encourage them to do so slowly. Quick changes can cause setbacks in their healing because they may not have been fully ready to deal with the consequences of it.

Encourage dialogue about loss.

The wounded must be able to voice the loss and name it. In the case of death or miscarriage, the person has a name. Use it! Do not minimize the

119. Thompson, et al., “Bereaved Parents and Siblings,” 159.

120. Toller, “Bereaved Parents,” 264.

121. Frank, “Religious Coping,” 16.

importance by using generic phrases like a brother, friend, co-worker, baby.

Do not make significant decisions for at least two months.

A person who has suffered a traumatic loss is not thinking clearly and is easy prey for cons unless they are protected. Encourage the wounded to take their time making decisions. Usually, this decision is regretted and then cannot be undone.

Stuffed Animal



In times of trauma, people need comfort, warmth, and a silent companion. Many people feel they are not well-equipped. However, God accepted Spirit-filled ministers as they were, full of guilt, anxiety, and all the idiosyncrasies of their personality, which equipped them to work with others during their times of crisis. The ministers were enabled to minister from the personal experience with a “loving, concerned” God’s acceptance and allow the ministry to the “wholeness” of a person who is suffering.¹²² Healing can stem from the loving nature of companionship.

During a crisis, there is emotional damage that occurs, and if healing is to occur, the “person needs comfort, acceptance, a non-judgmental listening ear,” and to know that there is hope.¹²³ In providing companionship, there are seeking hearts, and deep wounds uncovered and need to connect with someone who will listen, serve, build trust, and meet real needs before they are willing to listen to the gospel.¹²⁴ Many times, the most comforting thing that can be done is to sit silently and hold their hand. Listen without talking.

It stands to reason, doesn’t it, that if the alive-and-present God who raised Jesus from the dead moves into your life, he’ll do the same thing in you that he did in Jesus, bringing you alive to himself? When God lives and breathes in you (and he does, as surely as he did in Jesus), you are delivered from that dead life. With his Spirit living in you, your body will be as alive as Christ’s! (Rom 8:11, MSG)

122. Paulin, “The Contemporary Church’s Ministry,” 64.

123. Clinton and Hawkins, *Biblical Counseling*, 263.

124. Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 417.

According to Brueggemann, the antithesis of suffering is found in Yahweh's love (*'ahab*), healing, and forgiveness.¹²⁵ Paul told the Corinthians that God "comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God" (2 Cor 1:4). Paul reiterated this thought when he wrote to the Galatians, admonishing them to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Scripture tells believers that they ought to use their tests and trials to show God's love, healing, and forgiveness as a guide for others when they face similar difficulties.

Scripture



Sharing Scripture and reading materials can go either way with the wounded. If shared too soon, it may increase their pain, but it can bring great comfort when appropriate and indicated. It will also be appropriate to assure the wounded of God's love, but "sometimes when caregivers assure others of God's love, they are actually trying to reassure themselves. They may be struggling with their own faith and feelings about God."¹²⁶ The Bible offers hope to all who are worn down from their sorrow and grief. Comforters must not add to a grieving person's pain by offering Scripture or other platitudes without asking if it is beneficial, appropriate, and necessary. Here is a selection of verses that can bring a great deal of comfort and healing to the wounded.

"I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

"As one whom his mother comforts so I will comfort you, And you shall be comforted in Jerusalem." When you see this, your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like grass; The hand of the LORD shall be known to His servants And His indignation to His enemies" (Isa 66: 13-14).

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27).

"O LORD my God, I cried out to You, And You healed me" (Ps 30:2).

"He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds" (Ps 147:3).

125. Brueggemann, *Theology of the OT*, 441. God's love is displayed in the rehabilitation of Israel as promised in Jer 31:3 and Isa 48:14. God promised healing in Jer 30:17. God offered forgiveness as promised in Jer 31:34, 33:8, 36:3; Isa 55:7; Ezek 16:63; and Ps 103:9-14.

126. Haugk, *Don't Sing Songs*, 99.

"for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes" (Rev 7:17).

"And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4).

"Trust God from the bottom of your heart; don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go; he's the one who will keep you on track" (Prov 3:5-6, MSG).

Appendix C

The Unseen Impacts of Grief

Secondary Losses

To recap, the initial event that causes crisis, trauma, or suffering, include things like: identity crisis, economic event, major car wreck, natural disaster, crime, death, relocation, dementia, job loss, terminal illness, faith crisis, hospitalization, infertility, disability and cancer. Secondary losses are something that disappears after the initial event has occurred. When a person goes through a crisis, trauma, loss, or suffering, changes may appear in different areas of their life (Is 59:3,4).¹²⁷

Friends and family relate to one another differently during and after suffering. They may not know what to say or how to act, or they may distance themselves. Other people will draw closer. A person's interests, priorities, or goals change after a crisis, trauma, or loss, which may cause one to lose a connection to some friends and family members but may lead to new relationships and new friendships.

Regardless of the daily routines before the life-altering event, the routines will be changed after leading a person to feel lost. Over time, many people can develop a new routine that feels familiar and comfortable. After a life-altering event, there tends to be a reassigning of responsibilities. Someone will take on tasks that they are unfamiliar with and can be stressful to learn. After a person's loved one dies and one is no longer spending time taking care of him or her, there may be a feeling of having too much free time. This feeling can release many emotions that were previously able to keep hidden with caregiving's many tasks.

If one partner or family member was the primary wage earner, the survivor might need to work more hours, go back to work, or work for the first time. If the survivor is a parent with young children, this may mean arranging for daycare and having less time to spend at home. A family member's death can also bring changes to a family's finances, such as fewer paychecks, a difference in social security benefits, or payments from a life insurance policy. In the aftermath of a life-altering event, a person may question one's religious or spiritual beliefs or understanding of the meaning of life. Alternatively, one may find that their faith becomes stronger and a source of comfort.

Priorities may change to reflect what matters most now. Previous priorities such as work may be replaced by new priorities such as spending more time with family and friends or focusing on personal health. Priorities many need to be changed for practical reasons. For instance, becoming the family's primary wage earner, one may need to focus on finding a good job or building a career. One may also need to alter or delay personal goals, and hopes for the future as each person in the family adjusts to a new lifestyle. One may no longer be interested in some activities previously enjoyed. New interests may

127. Clinton, Hindson, and Ohlschlager, *The Bible for Hope*, Grief/loss "Dealing with loss and grief." By H. Norman Wright.

develop. These could include becoming involved in activities that were important to a loved one or volunteering at a local hospital or a cancer advocacy organization

It is easy to believe that everyone will have a very similar day, but that is not true in every person's life. When a family is dealing with suffering and grief, their daily routine is not so "normal" anymore.

Terminal Illness

After reflecting on the suffering and sorrow of the nuclear family, it is time to investigate how they are coping with all the changes occurring in their lives. Every person's grief is different, and everybody's circumstance is unique. That fact will lead to the obvious conclusion that every person will cope in different ways. Some families will hide the painful facts about the death of loved ones from younger children. Some people will argue that this practice is a good idea because children process death differently than adults. Experts state the allowing children to be in the midst of emotional activity surrounding the death of a loved one "gives them the feeling that they are not alone in the grief and gives them the comfort of shared responsibility and shared mourning."¹²⁸ When a death is imminent or has already occurred, the family is going to face a myriad of trials. In addition to the stages of grief that were discussed previously, there are other stages the family must now wade through: Crisis, Unity, Upheaval, Resolution, and Renewal.¹²⁹

The family enters a crisis state when a family member's child becomes ill and is diagnosed as terminal. Roles within the family begin to be redefined. Studies have shown that 67% of the men interviewed continued to work full time, while 61% of the women reduced their work schedule or took time off work to care for the ill.¹³⁰ As the illness progresses, their needs become greater and greater. Children in the home may begin to feel left out or neglected as there is so much energy being spent on the ill. Although children may not verbalize these feelings, they are certainly going through as many emotions as the parents. The more unified the parents are, the better it is on the children who do not fully understand the gravity of their loved one's illness and whom they are suddenly getting so much more attention than they are getting.

Upheaval occurs when the patient enters remission or plateaus and can be a time for the family to regroup and focus on the ill child's siblings. In many families, this is when they can do more family-oriented activities, take short trips, and even participate in one of those dream vacations offered to terminally ill children.

As the terminally ill take a turn for the worse and approaches the end of life, the family will enter a resolution time that will be the final acceptance of the disease stealing the life of their beloved child. Now is the time to say goodbye to the child. Parents become very emotionally drained and have already become financially drained. Their life has been defined by treatments and the illness that is stealing their joy. Renewal is the

128. Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying*, 20.

129. Okun and Nowinski, *Saying Goodbye*.

130. Rifat Alam et al., "Bereavement Experiences of Mothers and Fathers over Time after the Death of a Child Due to Cancer," *Death studies* 36, no. 1 (2012): 7.

final stage in this series and begins with the child's funeral and continues until the family has regained their footing and accepted their newly defined roles within the family and the community.

The bondage perceived by the wounded is different depending on their stage in the grief cycle. Without comfort and hope, these people do not stand a chance of breaking free. God promised to be with them always. Paul told the Corinthians that when he asked God to remove a thorn from his flesh, God responded by saying that "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9-10). Paul told the Romans that he was "strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what he had promised he was also able to perform" (Rom 4:20-21). Paul went on to say that he considered "that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy of being compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom 8:18).

Jesus stated, "Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. Therefore, you now have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you" (John 16:20,22). God also promised that he would "wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4). With all the assurances of comfort and hope that is offered throughout the Bible, people are still uncertain how to turn the Word of God into every day, practical, applicable skills

Flat-Brain Syndrome

It takes unloading the stomach to allow head functions to work.¹³¹

1. Reduce emotional disturbance. Help people name, acknowledge, and release their feelings.
2. Clarify thinking. Good listeners help them see the interaction between their feelings and thoughts, their actions, and the actions of others, and themselves and their situation.
3. Increase self-confidence. Listen with respect. Do not take over their problems. Make it clear they can manage their own lives. Encourage self-confidence and enable them to carry out the options they choose.
4. Build supportive friendships. Listening builds friendships so they do not feel alone. If they sense a connection, they find new strength and the courage to go on.

131. Petersen, *Why Don't We Listen Better?*, 31–32.

Appendix D

Creating a Circle of Love

When people cannot make sense of their suffering and grief, they turn to one of two places: the church or the metaphysical realm to “provide a rationale for their losses.”¹³² Often, people’s first choice is to reach out to the church; however, they refer people to the local government agencies unless the church is prepared. Referring people out is only putting a Band-Aid on the circumstances rather than helping them arrive at a workable solution and the ability to move forward. A workable solution would include providing the tools necessary for understanding their grief, “developing abilities to cope with problems, developing alternative ways of seeing reality, and to coping in the behavioral sphere,” as well as providing a safe space to “share emotions, provide empathetic listening, deal with emotions of loneliness and isolation, sorrow, pain, or anger, by allowing each group member to share their stories repeatedly, and to experience acceptance from the group.”¹³³ For people to experience actual resolution within their crisis, they would need to be willing to “let go of patterns and habits that create unfulfilled needs,” accept temporary help and be open to God’s grace and mercy, love, and acceptance.¹³⁴

Another thing to remember when ministering to the suffering and grieving is that part of the goal is to help reduce “anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and grief.”¹³⁵ Easing a person’s anxiety can be accomplished by honest conversations about their emotions and feelings and providing accountability for proper eating, sleeping, personal hygiene, weight gain/loss, and alcohol/tobacco use.¹³⁶

Family, friends, and faith play an ongoing support role for the bereaved.¹³⁷ People who are suffering or grieving may require guidance in understanding or remembering God’s unconditional love” and that God knows their hearts and pain. Despite their current pain, they will eventually feel God’s presence once again.¹³⁸ Attempting to “talk them out of being angry” may only make them angrier, but, instead, “help them understand this is normal and their faith will eventually strengthen them.”¹³⁹

With some guidance, a person’s defense mechanisms of “self-sufficiency, perfectionism, alibis, denial of reality, pride, compulsion to manipulate” can be identified

132. Johnson, “African-American Teen Girls,” 131.

133. Nehari, Grebler, and Toren, “A Voice Unheard,” 68.

134. Paulin, “The Contemporary Church’s Ministry,” 65.

135. Nancy Kentish-Barnes, Sylvie Chevret, and Elie Azoulay, “Impact of the Condolence Letter on the Experience of Bereaved Families after a Death in Intensive Care: Study Protocol for a Randomized Controlled Trial,” *Trials* 17 (February 20, 2016): 5.

136. Hill, “The Grieving Christian Father,” 84.

137. Arnold and Gemma, “Prenatal Grief,” 667.

138. Hill, “The Grieving Christian Father,” 82.

139. Hill, “The Grieving Christian Father,” 82.

and diminished.¹⁴⁰ As healing occurs, “love, friendliness, and peacefulness begin filling the void left by the negative, aggressive feelings and defense mechanisms” and encourages the development of “new ways to cope with the present crisis situation.”¹⁴¹

A “crisis intervention team” within a church would be established to address the needs that a family in crisis may encounter while trying to recover from the tragedy. With a single point of contact, this team can set a chain of events in motion designed to guide and support this family on the road to recovery and help them establish a “new normal” for their lives.

The church community would set up a “crisis” line, and only selected people would answer the call. This team would include leaders that would alternate as the “first responder” when a call is received about a family in crisis. The ministry teams will commit to spending a year in close contact with these families in crisis to ensure that they do not get lost within their grief and fall away from the church because they no longer feel cared about or ministered to.

This ministry could branch out and eventually involve all areas of ministry within the church. When they are not in need, the team would enjoy a time of idleness/rest, which is “as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body, and deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction” and can lead to burnout of the team.¹⁴² The team must take the time to rest after each crisis and resume work in their other areas of ministry.

Coordinator

When a family or individual is in need, it will be important that detailed information is gathered. An intake questionnaire will need to be completed. The questions will address: (a) the nature of the crisis, trauma, loss or suffering, (b) changes in daily routines, work, and relationships with friends and family, (c) financial status, (d) changes in how communication patterns, (e) spiritual status, (f) their current coping strategies, and (g) treatments being taken.¹⁴³ After determining the needs of the caller, the responder would delegate responsibilities to teams as needed. These leaders would prioritize the family's needs and allocate assignments to the appropriate teams within the church.

The coordinator will hold the wounded individual or family accountable for completing classes, seminars, group meetings, budgeting, and counseling as indicated by the situation. The coordinator will also determine the needs of the family and assign teams to fulfill them. Depending on the event's severity, a commitment to this wounded family or individual will vary from four to twelve months.

When selecting the individual(s) that will take on the responsibility of coordinating the circle of love around the wounded, it is crucial to look for someone with spiritually solid gifting in administration, leadership, and discernment. It is a good idea for all the participants to complete a spiritual gifting assessment to help place them in the best part of the circle. Having the right person in this position will make it easier to

140. Paulin, “The Contemporary Church’s Ministry,” 33.

141. Paulin, “The Contemporary Church’s Ministry,” 34–35.

142. Tim Kreider, “The ‘Busy’ Trap,” *New York Times* 161, no. 55819 (July 1, 2012).

143. Alam et al., “Bereavement Experiences,” 5.

choose people, motivate them, support them, evaluate and release or reassign them to make the circle move more effectively.¹⁴⁴

The coordinator would foster an atmosphere among the teams where they are united and defend the wounded who are “under attack by outside forces.”¹⁴⁵ The coordinator will inspire the other teams through “praise and exhortation” as indicated and redirection when needed.¹⁴⁶ When the coordinator leads individual followers and teams, they “collectively give motion and substance” to the ministry.¹⁴⁷

Peer

Scripture tells us that “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” Moreover, he was called the friend of God (Jas 2:23, NKJV). Jesus told his disciples: “Greater love has no one than this than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (John 15:13, NKJV). A Peer is an intentional friend and willing to sacrifice for another individual. With an increase in intentional or unintentional isolation, the wounded are usually “each other’s most significant source of support.”¹⁴⁸ When their relationships are interrupted, “the processing times” for their individual and collective grief was significantly impacted.¹⁴⁹ When their communication needs were misaligned regarding their grief expression, this was labeled as “openness-closedness.”¹⁵⁰ Bereaved mothers displayed “continued intense, and prolonged grief reactions and fathers reported to be more private and less intense than during the first weeks after the child’s death”¹⁵¹ When couples recognize the importance of each other’s style of grieving, individual and family grieving can occur.¹⁵² Couples needed to work with their differences instead of dismissing them to create a closeness that will facilitate the grieving process and growth as a couple.¹⁵³

Fellowship with friends and other Christians assist in lessening the emptiness that is created. External resources, including demonstrations of commitment, care, and acceptance, enable people to draw on inner resources to regain balance spiritually and emotionally.¹⁵⁴ Consoling others may provide positive and encouraging interaction; even though it may be foreign or uncomfortable, their sacrifice of self is appreciated by the one needing it.¹⁵⁵ Studies have determined that grieving people and have some degree of

144. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 139.

145. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 153.

146. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 154.

147. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 157.

148. Sherri Kamm and Brian Vandenberg, “Grief Communication, Grief Reactions, and Marital Satisfaction in Bereaved Parents,” *Death Studies* 25, no. 7 (2011): 570.

149. Kamm and Vandenberg, “*Grief Communication*,” 574.

150. Paige Toller and Dawn O Braithwaite, “Grieving Together and Apart: Bereaved Parent’s Contradictions of Marital Interaction,” *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 37, no. 3 (2009): 265.

151. Alam et al., “Bereavement Experiences,” 9.

152. Toller and Braithwaite, “Grieving Together,” 265.

153. Toller and Braithwaite, “Grieving Together,” 272.

154. Stone, et al., “Church Members,” 413.

155. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 53.

religious belief recover from their bereavement sooner than those without.¹⁵⁶ When it is impossible to process things with a spouse or partner, the peer will step in and become that listening ear. In this portion of the circle of love, the peer is available, allows venting, uses active listening skills, and avoids clichés.

During the commitment time frame, the peer agrees to be available at all times by email, text, Facebook, or phone day or night. During the initial phase of the recovery cycle, the peer may receive communication at all hours of the day or night, but as the weeks pass, this demand will lessen. By the time the end approaches, there are only a few scattered messages that will come in. The peer is not obligated to engage in long conversations with the wounded, especially in the middle of the night, but responding is required. They must know they are not alone because that is why they are reaching out. So responding is extremely important. Steve Sample talks about being available to his senior leaders at all times. He has this to say:

“When my assistant tells a senior officer, “Steve’s meeting with so-and-so,” or “He’s sleeping in Tokyo,” or whatever, the officer almost invariably says, “Oh, don’t disturb him. Perhaps he could call me when he’s free.” The difference is that the officer, not the staffer, decided that the matter could wait.”¹⁵⁷

Having the ability to have access to a peer without restrictions can give them a sense of power and purpose, which is essential in their recovery cycle.¹⁵⁸ During this challenging time, it would be appropriate to send cards and notes or even a basket with small wrapped gifts to open daily.

The peer will also allow the wounded to vent and name the source of their suffering. It is essential that the peer listening without judging the person or the circumstances. Many times, venting will allow the person to work through the issue on their own and simply want someone to permit them to ramble on and on without interrupting, unless absolutely necessary. When participating in this portion of the circle of love, it is vital to engage in active listening and avoid clichés. We discussed these during session four on Communication.

Participation Team

Creating an atmosphere of fellowship among the body where Christians understand that “a loving, nurturing community does not spring up to full possibility, maturity, and genuine welcome... [unless they] engage in some hard, sometimes tedious, but always essential work.”¹⁵⁹ It takes “focused intentionality and energy” along with a willingness

156 Walsh, et al., “Spiritual Beliefs,” 1551. *Pargament, et al., “Patterns of Positive and Negative Religious Coping,” 714. This study described bereavement and religious coping in five categories: religious participation, religious importance, perceived social support, cognitive processing of the loss, and finding meaning in the death.

157. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 131.

158. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 132.

159. Fettke, *God’s Empowered People*, 57.

to put aside any “human selfishness and personal agenda for success or happiness” to create a community of fellowship “arising from fervent pray and trust that the Spirit will make possible for diverse people a community of truth, love, and learning.”¹⁶⁰ Fellowship keeps families in crisis accountable. Studies have shown that if a person has talked about suicide, the most effective way to prevent it is to have an accountability contract with someone. That means being able to reach out to a specific person if thoughts of suicide arise. It is a great way to help families in crisis deal with emotions like anger, depression, and loneliness.

If Christians only fellowships with their friends and family who are not all believers, they run the risk of not having people to encourage them or lift them when they face difficulty. There are times when a Christian may feel adrift and not have a spiritual anchor when they are not plugged into their local church. Christians use many excuses for not plugging into their church: children’s sports activities, too busy with work and family life, do not know anyone at church, and the list can go on and on. “Busyness serves as a kind of existential reassurance, a hedge against emptiness” that could be filled with Christian fellowship, but “if you are so busy, completely booked and, in demand every hour of the day, it makes you feel important, sought-after and put-upon.”¹⁶¹ This self-importance inhibits a person’s ability to recognize their need for fellowship.

Being in fellowship with other believers has incredible effects on a person who is simply feeding one’s spirit over and above. The first side effect of fellowship is that it creates joy, which is an emotion, and that “joy produces energy,” which in turn “makes us strong.”¹⁶² Joy is found in celebrating “ourselves, our life, our world, *in conjunction with* our faith and confidence in God’s greatness, beauty, and goodness.”¹⁶³ When Christians celebrate, they usually fellowship with others. When God is included in that celebration, “holy delight and joy” is often the result and “is the antidote to despair and is a wellspring of genuine gratitude.”¹⁶⁴ When joy abounds and is sustained, it is contagious, and people want to be a part of whatever is causing the joy by “reciprocating in needs and ministries.”¹⁶⁵ When the body of Christ engages in the activity of sharing joy and ministering to others’ needs, there can be a wave that floods and overwhelms anyone in its path and inexplicably draws people to the source of the joy.

The spiritual discipline of fellowship is essential for the long-term well-being of the family in crisis. Once the immediate crisis passes, support of every kind tapers off. Often, these families are in danger of drifting away from the church and other people when they feel that people no longer care that they are suffering. Some families will take advantage of the others that are trying to help, and some that will become dependent on the constant help from others and not want to stand on their own two feet again. The problem comes in when families in crises get lost in the shuffle of everyday life. This discipline needs to be walked out so that there is still accountability for the afflicted family, yet they are not dependent on other people to make it through the day.

160. Fettke, *God’s Empowered People*, 58.

161. Kreider, “The ‘Busy’ Trap.”

162. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 191.

163. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 179.

164. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 179.

165. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 187.

The wounded are prone to falling prey to “excessive self-pity, isolation from other believers, inactivity when Christian service is physically possible, constant anxiety, refusal to pray earnestly, and inattention to the Father’s written Word.”¹⁶⁶ A person working to engage the wounded through participation will be available to attend classes, courses, or church activities with them. Spend time at their house fellowshiping, playing games, watching movies, or just being company is also essential when someone is the primary caregiver of a homebound individual. This situation will severely restrict the freedom that the caretaker will have. A team of participation volunteers would divide the duties amongst themselves to ensure that the homebound individual is cared for. The caretaker is given some time to attend business or other activities that were not possible without help.

People tend to avoid participating in classes, church events, and friends' night out when suffering. Research shows that 61% of mothers participated in activities that enabled them to deal with their child's death. Those activities included: “spending time reflecting on the positive memories of the child, talking to others about the deceased child, having faith in God and praying to meet up again with the child in heaven, caring from bereaved siblings, and spending time with family.”¹⁶⁷ Beyond that, some families felt it necessary to keep many of their activities the same as before the death, only with a twist. The bereaved would now spend their time going to their loved one’s grave several times a day, as if they were maintaining the deceased’s schedule, attempting to reclaim an emotional bond with the deceased by maintaining their room in the state it was left in (as a physical reminder of the deceased’s existence) and even placing the remains within the home.¹⁶⁸ It became apparent that the bereaved needed to treat birthdays and anniversaries as special occasions.¹⁶⁹ Honoring special occasions seemed to help the “bereaved cope and learn new strategies for managing the inevitable stress of family life over time.”¹⁷⁰

Grieving people appreciate it when the following things are said to them:¹⁷¹

- “Mention our loved one who has died by their name.”
- “Please do not be afraid to talk to us about the person who died. Do not pretend that he/she did not exist.”
- “Use the words ‘dead,’ ‘died,’ and ‘death.’”
- “Be patient. If we cry, please understand. If we make you feel uncomfortable, we do not mean to.” [Probably more uncomfortable than you]
- “Call and visit. Please do not wait for us to call you.”
- “If you see one of us sitting alone at church, in a restaurant, or anywhere else, please offer to sit with us.”

166. Becton, *Does God Care?*, 90.

167. Alam et al., “Bereavement Experiences,” 11.

168. Valerie Jennings and Honor Nicholl, “Bereavement Support Used by Mothers in Ireland Following the Death of Their Child from a Life-Limiting Condition,” *International Journal of Nursing* 20, no. 4 (n.d.): 175.

169. Joy Ufema, “Grieving Families,” *Nursing* 11, no. 11 (1981): 82.

170. Janet Lohan and Shirley Murphy, “Mental Distress and Family Functioning among Married Parents Bereaved by a Child’s Sudden Death,” *Omega: Journal of Death & Dying* 52, no. 4 (2005): 302.

171. Opalewski, *Adolescent Grief*, 57–59.

- “If you call and ask us to join you at some function and we say no, please call back for another time.”
- “Please remember that the normal grief cycle lasts about 24 months. In case of suicide, the grief cycle may last even longer.”
- “Thinking of you’ cards or notes on anniversaries of death, Father’s Day, Mother’s Day, the dead person’s birthday, or other memorable events, are greatly appreciated.”
- “If we vent our anger toward you, please forgive us.”
- “Please do not tell us that you know how we feel.”
- “Please do not tell us ‘you are a man/woman of the house now; you have to take care of your mom/dad, siblings.’”
- “Please be happy with us when something good happens.”
- “Help us to laugh again.”

Provision

The people who will take on the provisioning role will agree to commit to sponsoring a family for a set dollar amount for the length of the commitment designated by the coordinator. For example, a person can sponsor a family for one hundred dollars a month for twelve months, making the total available amount to twelve hundred dollars. The providers must remain anonymous to prevent being asked directly for funding. An account should be set up for this that is separate from benevolence funding at the church level because there is already an awareness of the need and does not need to be proved each time funds are requested. On the individual level, sponsorship funding will be submitted to the church either in a lump sum, monthly donations, or as required based on the needs.

This fund will be available to provide for small incremental needs as they arise as the wounded move through their recovery cycle. All requests and payments would be taken care of at the church level rather than the personal level. Examples of disbursements of these sponsored funds would include emergency groceries (like milk and bread, with a cap of fifty dollars), a tank of gas, children’s field trips at school or church, and summer camps if not able to require other sponsorship. Other things that could be covered in this fund are furnishings or small-ticket items for a home, especially after a tragedy like a fire, or help ensure that families are able to enjoy the various holidays.

Prayer

Prayer is a powerful tool when utilized correctly. While there is great healing power in prayer, the healing may not be coming in the form in which we think it should come. When praying for physical healing, it can be overdone, and people could become discouraged if healing is not manifested because “physical health, while it is a lovely

God-willed thing, is not the whole or the deepest part of health.”¹⁷² Healing does not focus on the “ailments but on positive spiritual truth.”¹⁷³ God can manifest the positive in any situation, even sickness and health. However, the total “possibilities” of healing will not be experienced until the church as a whole take “Christian healing much more seriously.”¹⁷⁴ God will listen to and answer prayers.

When the prayer warrior prays daily for the wounded family or individual, they should confess the Scriptures over that situation. The more specific the prayers, the more results can be seen. When praying for someone who has an illness or disability, it is good to research the issue and pray for individual aspects of the illness or healing. For example, if someone has arthritis, pray specifically for the joints, the bones, the lessening of the arthritis cells, the increase of the immune system, decrease in swelling and pain, the ability to walk upright, and the list goes on. “But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds, we are healed” (Isa 53:5, NIV).

To pray for someone does not necessarily mean laying hands on them. Regular intercession on their behalf is essential and should be done daily for the term of the commitment. Intercessory prayer, by definition, is a two-way conversation with God about needs and requests on behalf of another person with the openness to hear the voice of God and give direction for that person’s life.¹⁷⁵ Occasionally, a time of extraordinary, purposeful, intercessory prayer is called for. Usually, these “specials” are for a national crisis/issue or for families in crisis within the body who need a group of people to come alongside them and bolster their faith. Moses intercedes for Lot without seeing him, and he was saved. “Man was created to be loved by God, to explore and enjoy and reflect that love. But in order to love and be loved, he has to be free” (Gen 18:23-33).¹⁷⁶

People in crisis often offer “feeble prayers” that are “spoken in their own strength and often in desperation” and can seem like a “cry of desperation or [a] ‘grocery list’ of requests.” In contrast, these prayers are “heard on high,” people need to learn how to “lean more heavily on ‘praying in/by the Spirit,’” but do not have someone to show them.¹⁷⁷ That does not mean that the family experiencing a crisis does not have sufficient faith to see them through the crisis, but they are getting weary from the everyday burden that stems from the crisis.

During a crisis, it is difficult to maintain a prayer life, let alone stay faithful. Sometimes the tragedy is so great that simply getting from one moment to the next is a real struggle, and the family needs someone to stand in the gap for them when they do not have the emotional energy to pray. When a person’s mind is clouded with the

172. Roy Lawrence, *Christian Healing Rediscovered: A Guide to Spiritual, Mental, Physical Wholeness* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), 44.

173. Lawrence, *Christian Healing*, 45.

174. Lawrence, *Christian Healing*, 46.

175. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 184.

176. Lawrence, *Christian Healing*, 49.

177. Gordon D Fee, *Paul, the Spirit, and the People of God* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Pubs, 1996), 731.

circumstances of the crisis and the heavy emotions involved, it is difficult to “tune into God” and quiet the mind long enough to listen for God’s voice.¹⁷⁸

To begin the process of ‘stabilizing’ the prayer life of a family in crisis, the intercessor can simply begin to pray for the quieting of the mind of the person or family in crisis and show them that “prayer is an activity inspired by God himself, through his Holy Spirit” and through “his own empowerment presence, the Spirit of God himself” utters prayers that “is in keeping with God’s will and his ways.”¹⁷⁹ Depending on the severity of the crisis and the depth of the trauma, this may not be an easy road to navigate, and it may take a long time to reach stability.

Practical Acts Team

Practical acts of service and help meet the physical needs of the family that is in crisis. Research shows that human beings will “connive.” If we do not “purpose” to serve as a lifestyle, we will “‘serve’ only occasionally or when it is convenient or self-serving” because “serving is as commonplace as the practical needs it seeks to meet.”¹⁸⁰ This type of service is referred to as a “self-righteous” service. When service is done through “human effort,” it uses “immense amounts of energy calculating and scheming,” is concerned with “impressive gains,” requires external rewards,” “seeks human applause—with proper religious modesty,” and is selective about who is served.¹⁸¹ True service is “indiscriminate,” unaffected by “moods and whims,” a “lifestyle,” “sensitive,” “silent,” “builds community,” “draws, heals, binds” and provides a platform for developing “a relationship with the divine Other” as well as looks on the small acts of service as “the more important task.”¹⁸²

Christians should consider it an honor to serve others as Jesus did. Jesus found “the work of serving God was so satisfying and fulfilling” and declared that it fed him.¹⁸³ For an act to fall into the category of service, it must be done in the “spirit of Jesus,” humbly, free from ‘appearances’ and an expression of “active love” as it flows from a faith that “will safeguard us from innumerable pitfalls.”¹⁸⁴ Genuine service allows the Christian to “say ‘no!’ to the world’s games of promotion and authority” and destroys the “need and desire for a ‘pecking order’ that is used to “manipulate and control” people below them on the ladder of success.¹⁸⁵ Christians that are in “positions of influence, power, and leadership” face great challenges “fulfilling socially important roles” while being a true servant without “special training,” so they do not “foolishly follow the

178. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 39.

179. Fee, *Paul*, 731.

180. Donald S. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2014), 117.

181. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 128.

182. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 128–130.

183. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 126.

184. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 184.

185. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 127.

world” and are considered “qualified to speak with authority on spiritual service because of their success in the world.”¹⁸⁶

Every act of service has a ripple effect, and “whatever confronts a Christian s/he should respond;” whether s/he was asked to do it or not, “if a need arises in the body and no particular person is designated to do it—serve in that capacity until someone is.”¹⁸⁷ A faithful servant will lead the crowd instead of being a follower of it. The body of Christ cannot function properly when one part is broken or not working effectively. It is the responsibility of fellow believers to step up to the plate and provide needed services to families in crisis.

The Bible tells us that we need to provide for others. In 2 Sam 17:27-29, we find David in Mahanaim, Shobi, Makir, and Barzillai “brought bedding, basins, and pottery utensils. They also brought food for David and all who were with him, including wheat, barley, flour, roasted grain, beans, lentils, honey, curds, flocks, and cheese. For they said, “The people are no doubt hungry, tired, and thirsty there in the desert.”

This team would be the ones to provide the practical and caring acts that come up occasionally. Again, the coordinator's need for this team would be assessed, and schedules would be set up with the wounded and the team. Providing or preparing meals in disposable containers because the wounded may not have the energy to wash dishes. They could also be supplied with an assortment of reusable dishes for leftovers (if they do not have any). The Coordinator should be made aware of food allergies and dislikes. Other food-related chores like shopping or food prep could be available once a month to ease the burden.

Household maintenance and chores, yard work (mow, rake, clear branches, clean gutters, shoveling snow), washing the car, taking care of plants and gardens could be scheduled quarterly. Other tasks could include caring for children as needed, providing transportation, helping with appointments, shopping or running errands, caring for pets or other animals if hospitalized, making telephone calls, housesitting during a funeral, or even meeting incoming relatives at the airport. When attending to these activities, it is vital to keep the visits short and stay long enough to complete the tasks.

A ministry of intervention for families in crisis shows the community that the church has become the hands and feet of Jesus. This team would be available to these families as a support system that would pick up where others have left off. Someone to walk with through the dark months after friends and family have gone back to work or moved on with their lives. To be a shoulder to lean on when their faith is faltering and their strength is gone. This ministry would be a practical, hands-on ministry that would involve a designated team of people willing to oversee special projects and be accountability partners.

Churches can be a great source of comfort and help if both the professional ministers and the laity move out of their comfort zone and increase their safe bubbles to include those around them who need a safe bubble. Once equipped with knowledge about the suffering and grieving in a congregation and empowered with tools to facilitate their

186. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 183.

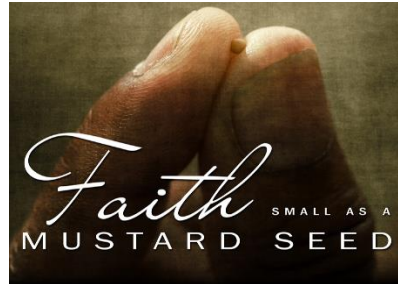
187. Benny C. Aker, “Charismata: Gifts, Enablements, or Ministries?,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 11, no. 1 (October 2002): 22–23.

recovery cycle, ministers are admonished to go and make a difference in the lives of the wounded. Their lives and marriages could depend on a comforter's loving actions.

Appendix E

Creating an On-going Support Group

Mustard seed



Keep hold of faith. There are many times that people need to be acknowledged and told that they have worth.¹⁸⁸ Allender summarized a cultural issue by saying that people go beyond simply avoiding pain into the realm of escaping from the reality of their lives.¹⁸⁹ Escaping may work temporarily, but it eventually kills the soul. Allender continued this thought by describing death as both reality and symbolic, where death is the result of “separation from the status you get from your work, the respect you receive from others, the benefits from your material possessions, [and] the presence of your loved ones.”¹⁹⁰ Death leaves its mark on the soul. Fear and despair are two side effects of grief. Despair is “the utter absence of any sense of hope, accompanied by a feeling of powerlessness. Despair leads to resignation and possibly suicide.”¹⁹¹ These emotions can be dispelled or diminished by a deepening relationship with God. A relationship with God fosters hope, and “hope is a loan from the past and the future, enabling us to deal with the debt of the present.”¹⁹² Hope is the key to restoration.

There are too many people in the world that suffer from a lack of self-esteem. When people have this issue, it is difficult for them to find their worth in anything, even in God. These people tend to wonder how God could love them, that they have so little value to anyone, so why would God. There are layers piled upon layers of pain, hurt, shame, guilt, feelings of worthlessness, and rejection. God’s love must be woven into these layers and eventually pierces through the bruised and battered heart hidden below. When people are going through a hard time, they must be bolstered through words of affirmation. Someone needs to come alongside them and whisper words of encouragement and help them look for a sliver of light in their darkness. Every person needs someone that will remind them they are more than the mistakes that they have

188. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 136–140.

189. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 3.

190. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 63.

191. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 115.

192. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *The Cry of the Soul*, 197.

made, they are wonderfully made, and God created them and knew them before they were born.

Creating Forward Momentum

Grieving people may “feel the loss of wholeness” or feel they need time and space to adjust to the gap in their life.¹⁹³ Living with a new normal no longer includes the person's influence or the creation of new memories with that person but learning to live with death's reality.¹⁹⁴ Family roles are redefined upon the death of a loved one. The roles of “mother,” “father,” and siblings and the new familial hierarchy functions are redefined. It is vital to assist each member of the family to maintain their own position within the family. Through the church's emotional, physical, and spiritual support, a bereaved family will slowly move through grief.

In remembering that life is an ongoing process, people need to accept the change and not pretend that life will be the same before death. The ongoing effects of death occur in the material, relational, functional, health, systematic, and intrapsychic aspects and will need to be addressed when recognized.¹⁹⁵ The “process” of grieving has not ended, but the irreversibility of death is accepted, and it is necessary to move forward in life. Grief becomes recognizable, and the emotions can be processed; however, “grief can come and go in the life of an individual.”¹⁹⁶ Every time a special occasion arrives, grief relapses can occur. As people journey through their grief, they must learn to celebrate their loved one's enjoyment of each occasion and not allow emotions to diminish deceased loved ones' memory.

Teaching the family how to honor the memory of the deceased is vital to their recovery. Each member of the family will have different reflections and special times that need to be remembered. Without honoring the deceased's memory, the bereaved family members will not move through the stages of grief out of fear that they will forget the deceased. There needs to be healthy processing of the memories so the parents can avoid getting stuck in their grief and unable to live again.

Glue Stick



People expect the church to hold them together in times of crisis. As the centuries have passed, ministering to those in crisis has been part of the church, and people have learned to expect that the church would be there to help in times of crisis.¹⁹⁷ There are churches in almost every neighborhood, and the clergy are often the first resource people seek out

193. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 49.

194. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 38.

195. Daugherty, *ApParent*, xii.

196. Daugherty, *ApParent*, 45.

197. Stone et al., “Church Members,” 405.

for help.¹⁹⁸ Due to this expectation level, the best way to help the suffering people in our communities is to train and prepare the congregations to handle their crises to help others when crises come.¹⁹⁹ This level of preparation requires teaching people how to make caring connections with others through spiritual formation and discipleship, believing that the cure for crises is God's work, and making the church feel like a place where people are accepted, wanted, and valued.²⁰⁰ In times of crisis, ministers and the church are thrust onto the global stage, almost as if they are being judged by the world and expecting the church to respond in specific ways.

The Spiritual Discipline of Caring (for others and self) is essential as it connects people together and people to God. Ministering to families and individuals who have experienced traumatic life events is an underdeveloped and underutilized ministry in the church world. Hurting people need a support system that will pick up where others have left them still in need; to walk through the dark months after friends and family have gone back to work or moved on with their lives. They need a shoulder to lean on when their faith is faltering and their strength is gone. A ministry geared to them would be a practical, hands-on ministry that would involve a designated team of people willing to oversee special projects and be accountability partners. A partnership with the accountability partner will hopefully be a lasting relationship between the parties involved.

Megan Devine said that “the way we deal with grief in our culture is broken.”²⁰¹ She followed that statement with the thought that “our cultural and professional ideas about what grief should look like keep us from caring for ourselves inside grief, and they keep us from being able to support those we love.”²⁰² She continued by saying that “grief is part of love. Love for life, love for self, love for others. What you are living, painful as it is, is love. And love is really hard. Excruciating at times.”²⁰³ It is not easy to exist without love. People attempt to cut themselves off from hurt by turning off their love, which tends to leave them empty, broken, and angry.

Honoring someone else's grief includes identifying and allowing it to exist in the same space as joy and peace, not rushing, not sweeping it aside, not covering it up, and practicing kindness.²⁰⁴ “Kindness is self-care. Kindness is recognizing when you need to back off a bit...kindness means not letting your own mind beat you up. Self-kindness is seriously difficult.”²⁰⁵ Kindness to self is vital to grief recovery. Suffering is a result of being alive. Experiencing joy and love will undoubtedly lead to some sort of suffering. In today's culture, “it's hip to be cynical” and to “disdain innocence” and childhood.²⁰⁶ Allender talks about suffering and grief being “similar to vomiting” because “at its deepest convulsion it exhausts, nauseates, and relieves; it empties us, weakens us, and

198. Paulin, “The Contemporary Church's Ministry,” 59.

199. Wright, *Complete Guide to Crisis & Trauma Counseling*, 137.

200. Clinton and Ohlschlager, *Competent Christian Counseling*, 31.

201. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That You're Not OK*, xv.

202. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That You're Not OK*, xvii.

203. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That You're Not OK*, 5.

204. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That You're Not OK*, 87.

205. Devine and Nepo, *It's OK That You're Not OK*, 113.

206. Dan B. Allender, *Sabbath* (Nashville, Tenn: Thomas Nelson Inc, 2009), 137.

prepares us for food that in due season will strengthen us; but in its immediate aftermath, we need rest” that is found in the Sabbath silence and “opens the heart to meditation and prayer.”²⁰⁷

Devine said there is “no getting over it [(suffering and grieving)], but only getting under it; loss and grief change our landscape.”²⁰⁸ If there is no getting over it, then perhaps the time has come for us to learn how to deal with it and encourage others to deal with it. Just as people have a great capacity to hurt others, there is a bigger capacity to show compassion and help others. Often, a little guided training is needed to create compassionate ministers that focus on traumatized people.

When people who are wounded, suffering, and grieving are provided with a safe atmosphere to heal, they feel different inside and experience a more “organic development process.”²⁰⁹ When safety is perceived and received, the “problem of commitment, alignment, motivation and change just melts away.”²¹⁰ When people turn “the fact of potential into the fact of results,” the changes and goals take on a life of their own.²¹¹ Many people interviewed indicated that a support group would “provide a venue for parents to remember and talk about their child without infringing time limits on their grief.”²¹² Often, “bereaved parents were frequently the targets of unwanted advice and information.”²¹³ In cases like this, the greatest gift a church can give these congregation members is protection.²¹⁴ The Bible tells us in Rom 12:15 to “rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.

Building Blocks and Instruction Sheet



When playing with building blocks, a person’s creativity can run wild. There is no limit on what can be built. People are like that to God. There are so many different combinations of characteristics that no two people have the same DNA. Hidden within our DNA is our calling; it is inescapable.²¹⁵ When attempting to build a structure, every piece must fit perfectly or not function correctly. As with a clay pot, when it is broken,

207. Allender, *Sabbath*, 171.

208. Devine and Nepo, *It’s OK That You’re Not OK*, xi.

209. Collins, *Good to Great*, 168.

210. Collins, *Good to Great*, 176.

211. Collins, *Good to Great*, 177.

212. Toller, “Bereaved Parents,” 27.

213. Toller, “Bereaved Parents,” 29.

214. Sample, *Contrarian’s Guide*, 29.

215. Ruth Haley Barton and Leighton Ford, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership: Seeking God in the Crucible of Ministry*, 1st ed. (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Books, 2008), 76.

building blocks need to be reassembled. Every life can be put back together, but not all lives are put together properly.

We cannot reassemble our lives without God's help. We have to listen for the "still, small voice of God telling us who we really are" and how to be the person He designed us to be.²¹⁶ God is the one with the blueprint for each person's life. In order to bring it to the surface and bubble over, we must allow God to work in our lives and piece us together as he has designed us.

When the people persecuted Moses for his leadership abilities and shortcomings, he cried out to God on their behalf. He "used his energy to carry the people into the presence of God, to cry out on their behalf and to listen to God for their next steps."²¹⁷ God responded to Moses,

The people will follow you because you have met me. Because you know my name deep in your being. That is what qualifies you to be a spiritual leader, and that is why people will be willing to follow you right out of the place they have known for so long to a place that is brand-new.²¹⁸

By allowing God to assemble us, and reassemble us, the way He designed us to be will draw people to God and allow His glory to shine in and through each of us

Edifying Others

In ministry, it is crucial to edify each other and the suffering and grieving in a congregation. To edify someone is to teach (someone) to improve the mind or character or to build them up; to strengthen someone or be strengthened. Edifying underscores the social and community character of life in Christ breaks down barriers of alienation and creates unity. Paul identifies four characteristics that are needed to edify others:

(a)humility (*tapeinophrosyne*), which is only used six times in NT and refers to lowly servitude, (b)gentleness (*prautes*), which also means controlled strength and considerateness, (c)patience (*makrothymia*), or endurance in suffering, and (d)forbearance, which is to hold up another, to love, and to exemplify Christ. Steven Sample says that

"It's relatively easy for people to agree on the characteristics of an effective leader: he has a clear and compelling vision; inspires trust, commitment, and self-sacrifice among his followers; chooses capable lieutenants; keeps his eye on the goal; and pushes himself and others relentlessly."²¹⁹

The ministry to suffering and grieving congregants can create an "awkward shyness, and lack of pretense was coupled with a fierce, even stoic, resolve toward

216. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 29.

217. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 142.

218. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 81.

219. Sample, *Contrarian's Guide*, 107.

life.”²²⁰ Team members need to remember that they are entering another person’s house of pain, and they must “stop trying to become qualified for the job” and simply and prayerfully go for it.²²¹

Characteristics of Effective Group Discussions

1. Express oneself to the whole group instead of to one person.
2. Listen attentively.
3. Be concise and precise.
4. Do not chew gum while talking.
5. Be or act interested.
6. Keep the discussion in the group confidential.
7. Be prepared for the discussion if given notice.
8. Be polite to the group members.
9. Be open-minded.
10. All members should have a chance to speak in an orderly manner.
11. Avoid destructive comments.
12. Have eye contact.
13. Do Not interrupt the speaker.
14. Speak loudly and clearly.
15. Avoid distractions.
16. Do not yell when trying to get the point across. Speaking louder does not make the person more persuasive.
17. Use proper grammar.
18. Try not to get off-topic. Do not socialize once the group begins.
19. The discussion should have a conclusion.
20. Think before speaking.
21. Try to support ideas with facts rather than opinions.
22. Be calm even if disagreements arise.
23. Be supportive and understanding.
24. Keep personal conflicts out of group discussions.
25. Remain active until the group has reached the established goals.
26. The group may want to have a group leader organize the discussion.
27. The key points should be recorded.
28. Speak at the same level as the group or explain terms.
29. Avoid profanity.
30. Avoid being vague.
31. Only one person should speak at a time.
32. Question a person to clarify what they are talking about.

220. Collins, *Good to Great*, 18.

221. Collins, *Good to Great*, 20.

Appendix F

Ministry Teams

Building Ministry Teams

Coordinating a network of teams and individuals is vital in creating a safe and non-judgmental atmosphere that will facilitate a wounded family or individual's recovery cycle. Jim Collins said that having the right people in a leadership position makes the problem of motivating and managing people essentially go away.²²² He continues by saying that “the main point is first to get the right people on the bus (and the wrong people off the bus) before you figure out where to drive it.” When the wrong people stay on the bus of a ministry, it is unfair to the right people and tends to lead to “compensating for the inadequacies of the wrong people” and could “drive away from the best people,” which could lead to the ministry becoming mediocre or even failing.²²³

A leader or coordinator cannot “manufacture passion” in the people within a ministry or motivate them to feel passionate about it, but can only fan the flames of your passion and ignites “the passions of those around you.”²²⁴ To make a ministry successful, it takes “disciplined people, who engage in disciplined thought, then take disciplined action.”²²⁵ Value in a ministry is added when there are core values attached to it. It does not matter what those values are, as long as they are present and built into the ministry's very fabric and are preserved as time passes.²²⁶ It should be the leader's task to “define reality” within this ministry.²²⁷ Settle on the deepest convictions about this mission and stay focus on it. Harold Myra told readers to “keep the main thing the main thing” and not respond reactively.²²⁸

To find out what the main thing should be, Thom Rainer said to identify the ABCs: awareness of the issue, belief that a gap exists, and a crisis in the leader's heart to correct the issue.²²⁹ Leaders should be aware that there are people in the congregation who are suffering and grieving. Unless they are identified, they will drift in and out without finding the healing atmosphere they so desperately need. Do not let them fall through the cracks in the church. It is time to tighten the circle of love around these people and truly show the love of Jesus to them. In one of her journals, Mother Teresa described how she “used subtraction” to keep going in ministry: “every time she loved and cared for a destitute and dying man, every time she rescued a girl from prostitution, she was subtracting from despair and adding to hope.”²³⁰ G.K. Chesterton said that “hope

222. Collins, *Good to Great*, 42.

223. Collins, *Good to Great*, 56, 72.

224. Collins, *Good to Great*, 109.

225. Collins, *Good to Great*, 153.

226. Collins, *Good to Great*, 195.

227. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 103.

228. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 87.

229. Thom B Rainer, *Breakout Churches: Discover How to Make the Leap* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 29.

230. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 102.

is the power of being cheerful in circumstances which we know to be desperate.”²³¹ Billy Graham said that “hope is both biological and physically vital,” and every person needs it.²³²

Creating change begins with attitude.²³³ When making changes, a balance needs to be maintained, regardless of how difficult it will become. Unwavering faith needs to be balanced with discipline to “confront the most brutal facts” of the current reality, whatever that might be.²³⁴ To be as authentic as possible, every person must accept that humanity has its limitations.²³⁵ In the face of those limitations, everyone has the choice to “implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually as a people, and a nation, or whether we choose to become stronger.”²³⁶ Leaders may experience fear but must learn that it is “an ally,” “a catalyst,” designed to highlight reality, and “helps equip us to lead.”²³⁷

To bring change within a congregation, study the various ministries in the church and determine what “*not* to do and what to *stop* doing.”²³⁸ The leader will require great courage to continue taking risks that may leave them open to being a target and “deep in the pits” with their followers.²³⁹ Taking risks could mean confronting the fact that not all ministries in the church are successful for various reasons, but if it can be saved, look at the changes that need to be made. A great leader will adjust the strategy to “brutal new realities, adapt to growth, resistance, and reversals.”²⁴⁰

This adjustment requires a “balance of praise blended with expectations for learning and growth.”²⁴¹ This growth will be found by evaluating the changes and adjusting to the new circumstances and information as it arises.²⁴² The change in team members must be handled delicately and done with “unconditional love and acceptance.”²⁴³ Great leaders cannot be “complacent with the status quo to avoid conflict.”²⁴⁴ Almost any organization can substantially improve its stature and performance, perhaps even become great, if it conscientiously applies the framework” presented.²⁴⁵

231. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 103.

232. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 105.

233. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 135.

234. Collins, *Good to Great*, 13.

235. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 48.

236. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 106.

237. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 159.

238. Collins, *Good to Great*, 11.

239. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 156.

240. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 39.

241. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 127.

242. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 143.

243. Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 62.

244. Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 87.

245. Collins, *Good to Great*, 5.

Selecting Team Members

When selecting team members for a ministry, it is essential to have the right people before real change can occur. The people selected for the team should be able to “understand, then communicate with empathy and creativity, and be aware that the seed they sow must be carefully tended if they are to grow.”²⁴⁶ The team members must understand that their strengths are “complementary” to the other team members “rather than competitive.”²⁴⁷ Team members must keep their focus clear, know how to handle money appropriately, have sexual morality, encourage others to do similar work, and be realistic about accomplishments.²⁴⁸

In Eph 4:12-13, Paul wrote that there are different offices in the ministry and that they are “for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” With this in mind, the believers ought to “work together as parts of the body, respecting each other’s gifts” and their life calling because they represent Christ, his “face to the world; his voice...his hands and his feet.” The head sustains and nurtures life, a source, and serves.

Thom Rainer identified a list of positive attributes that add value to a team:²⁴⁹

- Maintain times of personal prayer and Bible study
- Attend and contribute to a home fellowship group
- Attend and contribute to one of the ministries
- Provide regular and substantial financial giving to the church’s general fund
- Serve in a defined ministry or leadership role
- Undertake yearly self-equipping projects
- Practice mature management of interpersonal conflict and dissent in the congregation
- Live up to the character qualifications for a deacon as given in 1 Timothy 3
- Complete extensive course work
- Be nominated by an existing Servant team member and endorsed by others
- Be willing to undergo a background check and be interviewed by leaders of the church
- Submit to an annual follow-up interview if requested.
- Knowing what to say to a hurting person
- Understanding, empathizing with or validating someone’s struggles
- Getting people to open up
- Prayer, meditation, and resisting temptation²⁵⁰
- Experiences with critics promote humility and protect from “vainglory.”²⁵¹

246. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 264.

247. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 43.

248. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 55–56.

249. Rainer, *Breakout Churches*, 120.

250. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 63.

251. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 85.

- Modest and willful, humble and fearless²⁵²
- Welcome genuine partnership to allow accountability and effectiveness.²⁵³

Additionally, a list consists of negative attributes that need to be removed from ministry to function effectively. Harold Myra reminded readers that “other people’s negative behavior reminds leaders that their work is not complete.”²⁵⁴ He also stated that “leaders should have a remarkable ability to shed weariness, self-pity, and pessimism.”²⁵⁵ Other behaviors that need to be expunged are:

- Discrediting behavior
- Talking too much, listening too little
- Having a ‘fix-it mentality
- Feeling discomfort in the face of someone’s pain
- Focusing on self rather than the hurting person
- Wanting people to ‘get over it.’
- Avoiding painful subjects
- Avoid hurting persons
- Giving advice, being too direct
- Minimizing the significance of the pain or suffering
- Being judgmental
- Wanting to hear only the positive
- Responding with clichés, platitudes, or pat phrases
- Feeling helpless
- Handling the anger of those who are suffering
- Putting ambition before ministry (in a harmful manner)²⁵⁶

252. Collins, *Good to Great*, 22.

253. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 113.

254. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 86.

255. Myra and Shelley, *Leadership Secrets*, 95.

256. Collins, *Good to Great*, 21.

Appendix G

Self-Care

Fostering Longevity in Ministry

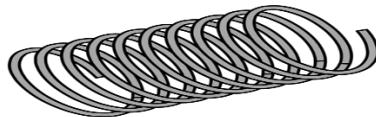
On the other side of ministering to hurting people, it is vital that ministers learn and value self-care. Far too often, ministers are the victims of moral failure and ministry burnout. These results could have been avoided if the minister employed the discipline of self-care. Self-care includes taking time to play and relax.

The Cup



This is a reminder to remain in communion with God and with others. Accountability and mentoring are crucial to deepening a relationship with God. In a society where mentoring has fallen by the wayside, the population, in general, does not have the necessary skills to provide a family in crisis with long-term accountability. The biggest crisis did not hit until weeks after the funeral. By this time, the crowd had tapered off to a couple of people, the family had scattered, and the bereaved are left without people checking on their mental well-being.

Spring Toy



Being stretched is not a bad thing, but constant stretching without a rest in between can cause lasting damage to a minister's health and spiritual well-being. When one is in balance and serving as it was meant to mean, we will retain our stretchiness and bounce back sooner.

Putty



For putty to remain a helpful toy, it must remain pliable. It has to be taken out and played with, moistened by skin oils, or else it will dry out and become unusable. It is the same with believers if they spend all their time devoted to ministry and have a schedule so packed that finding time to play is difficult or an interruption, then it is time to check their pliability. The Bible says believers are clay in the hands of the potter (Isa 64:8). Captivity, or bondage, has a way of depleting a person's mental, emotional, and spiritual resources. Barton says this depletion can manifest itself through: "(1) irritability or hypersensitivity, (2) restlessness, (3) compulsive overworking, (4) emotional numbness, (5) escapist behaviors, (6) disconnected from our identity and calling, (7) not able to attend to human needs, (8) hoarding energy, and (9) slippage in our spiritual practices."⁷¹⁴ Once a person begins this downward spiral, there is only one way to go, and that is up. Captives need to fall to their knees and lookup. It is only at the end of humanity's ability, personal limits, that God can, and will, help. Regardless of a person's depth of faith, disruptions occur and do not quickly disappear.

Allender indicates that "fruitful" suffering "should be: (1) temporary, (2) understandable, and (3) readily applicable to life's practical realities."⁷¹⁵ God often uses these struggles to make Christians hit the pause button and seek him for direction and comfort. He wants believers to get to the place where they "listen for the still, small voice of God telling us who we really are and what is real from a spiritual point of view."⁷¹⁶ When we reach this place, we can hear God speak and guide us. After hearing from God, it is our responsibility to "repattern" our lives and turn from the things that are destroying our leadership abilities and to "live into the love, trust, and courage that God is inviting us to."⁷¹⁷ Spending time with our creator will keep us from becoming dry and hard.

Devotional

The Lord said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord. Look, the Lord is ready to pass by." A mighty wind went before the Lord, digging into the mountain and causing landslides, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the windstorm, there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake, there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. After the fire, there was a soft whisper (1 Kgs 19:11-12).

714. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 104–106.

715. Allender, Longman, and Tada, *Cry of the Soul*, 233.

716. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 29.

717. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 49.

Communion Cup



Communion is to remind people to spend time in prayer and engage in a two-way conversation with God with the openness to hear the voice of God and receive direction. At one point during his Ministry, Jesus admonishes his followers to pray always and not to “faint” or grow weary in their prayer life (Luke 18:1). On the night of his arrest, Jesus goes into the garden of Gethsemane to pray. He brings the disciples (minus Judas) with him. He instructs them to remain alert, pray that they do not fall into temptation, and keep watch. Jesus goes further into the garden and begins to pray. “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but thine, be done.” During his most significant hardship, Jesus did not turn from God but turned to Him. He pleaded that his pain would end, but his desire to do God’s Will was more substantial than his desire to give up on his mission.

After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the same group of men “who earlier could not ‘watch and pray’ with the Lord for one hour now guided the group in continuous prayer for ten days.”⁷¹⁸ They proved that the “empowering of the Spirit” is associated with their prayers as Paul wrote to the Ephesians that they should be “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”⁷¹⁹ Prayer is the spiritual discipline that “brings us into the deepest and highest work” that is “life creating, and life-changing” where “God slowly and graciously reveals...and sets us free” so “we begin to desire the things [God] desires, to love the things he loves, and to will the things he will.”⁷²⁰ Prayer is “the inward habit of belonging to God” and develops spiritual eyes so that one is able to focus on God “while our outward eyes are seeing the scenes of this passing world.”⁷²¹ Prayer refocuses the thoughts. It enables a person to turn from the problems to the provider.

Prayer is a discipline that requires “submission,” which “means etymologically, surrender to another.”⁷²² In this case, Christians surrender themselves to God. Surrendering in prayer is “an expression of devotion” that shows “love for God,” “praise” that glorifies God, “petition” where someone is “humbly asking God” for something, “lament” where the believer can “express disappointments and confusion,” and finally “submission” where the one who is praying can be “saying ‘Thy Will be done.’”⁷²³ When

718. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 138.

719. Fee, *Paul*, 730.

720. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 33.

721. A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God*, 1st ed. (Christian Publications, Inc., 1948), 37.

722. Oswald Chambers, *Christian Discipline* (Fort Washington, Pa.: Christian Literature Crusade, 1973), 28.

723. Steven M. Fettke, “Prayer and Sound Theology” (Discussion Lecture, Southeastern University, n.d.), 2.

Christians spend time in prayer, an intimacy of relation” develops with God, which proves they are “spiritually concentrated on God.”⁷²⁴ The more often one prays, the more prepared one will be to pray when needed. We will think of praying more often. As our prayer life grows, we will “see the results of prayer,” and our “confidence in God’s power spills over” and “we can train ourselves to invoke God’s presence” in all our activities.⁷²⁵ This will improve “our outlook and increase our love for others” and result in “service and work and activity” that helps both mature and young believers.⁷²⁶ Prayer changes things and opens the Christian up for many blessings.

Colored Pencils



Is there time to sit silently before God? How much time is spent in quiet prayer, clearing the mind, and waiting for God to speak? When indulging in quiet time with God, quiet the mind and try to listen to His voice. It is vital that a person first quiet their mind, clear away “fleshly activity,” attune oneself to “divine breathings,” and listen for “the silent thunder” of the voice of God.⁷²⁷ The act of coloring can be an excellent conduit for releasing the mind’s worries. To focus on coloring and ultimately on the voice of God, be sure to have a paper and pencil handy to write down anything that comes to mind. The more that is written down, the less there is to consciously think about and the easier it will be to hear God’s voice. Believers gain confidence in their prayer life because “they have learned to pray by humbly asking God and asking according to God’s will (1 John 5:14).”⁷²⁸ Praying and believing that answers will come as expected was out of “proportion” to the true purpose of prayer; being more focused on the “need of prayer” than the “attainment of communion,” taking a “penitent approach to God” and waiting on His answer that would come in His time, by the means that He set forth will bring outstanding results.⁷²⁹ When payer is approached with the proper attitude, “conversing with God cannot fail to have a pervasive and spiritually strengthening effect” on every part of one’s personality and life activities.⁷³⁰ To have a good conversation with God, one must position themselves to hear from God and not just talk to him. Prayer is a conversation and not a listing of wants and desires.

724. Chambers, *Christian Discipline*, 15.

725. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 185.

726. Tozer, *Pursuit of God*, 37.

727. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 39.

728. Fettke, “Prayer and Sound Theology,” 3.

729. Chambers, *Christian Discipline*, 12.

730. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 184.

Christians must learn how to pray, focus on listening for God's voice, and "be in contact" so that His "life and power can flow through" them.⁷³¹ The prayer warrior must understand that "listening to the Lord is the first thing, the second thing, and the third thing necessary for successful intercession" and s/he must "listen for guidance" so s/he can "learn not only who God is, but how his power operates" and not let fear interfere when the Bible states "that great miracles are possible through faith the size of a tiny mustard seed."⁷³² When a person's mind is clouded with the circumstances of the crisis and the heavy emotions involved, it is difficult to "tune into God" and quiet the mind long enough to listen for God's voice.⁷³³ People in crisis often offer "feeble prayers" that are "spoken in their own strength and often in desperation" and can seem like a "cry of desperation or [a] 'grocery list' of requests;" while these prayers are "heard on high," people need to learn how to "lean more heavily on 'praying in/by the Spirit,'" but do not have someone to show them.⁷³⁴ Clearing the mind opens the channel to hear from God.

Fork



It is not possible to get to know someone without spending time with them. The Bible talks about fellowship. Jesus spent time eating with his Disciples, Zacchaeus, tax collectors, and various other undesirables. Jesus also fed people. On two separate occasions, he fed thousands of people while they listened to him teach. Allender wrote: "time, food, conversations, sorrow, hope, and companionship take on a rare, sweet, and compelling cast when one discovers holy time...the holy usually comes in unexpected, utterly surprising moments where the gift of goodness opens our heart to wonder and gratitude."⁷³⁵ He continued to say: "the Sabbath is the bridge that takes us from the first three [Commandments], which focus on God, to the final five, which concentrate on our relationships with others....The Sabbath is a day of delight for humankind, animals, and the earth...is a feast that remembers our leisure in Eden."⁷³⁶ The feast of dining on the good things of God. Scripture tells believers that they should hide the Word of God in their hearts so they remember not to sin.

731. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 38.

732. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 39.

733. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 39.

734. Fee, *Paul*, 731.

735. Allender, *Sabbath*, 3.

736. Allender, *Sabbath*, 5.

Sabbath and Sabbaticals

The Ten Commandments are not “an arbitrary list of rules” as some people perceive but “a prescription for a joy-filled and healthy life, a life of well-being” and “works best when a day is set aside to honor God, when children respect parents when stealing, murder and adultery are forbidden when people do not lie to each other or covet others’ possessions.”⁷³⁷ Attacks against spiritual disciplines are often “expressions of fear and hatred of the material world or as attempts to manipulate or impress God and others.”⁷³⁸ The believer must take responsibility for “his/her maturity” and should “begin to look for opportunities to bless and serve” others within the church and community.⁷³⁹ Christians become “spiritually advanced” by practicing the spiritual disciplines over and over again.⁷⁴⁰

Developing a discipline is “a matter of full commitment and obedience.”⁷⁴¹ Jesus set the example of “spiritual strength” as something that needs some “practice” to “maintain [a] full spiritual life.”⁷⁴² The results of “turning inward to the spiritual disciplines led to” the discovery of “a Christian who is radically committed to obeying Jesus Christ, one who studies Jesus’ teachings and puts them into practice,” which takes “effort, commitment, will power and regimentation.”⁷⁴³ The discipline of caring for oneself will take a person to a place where things can happen. The real blessings that God has planned for his children and others are not “something that is poured on our heads.”⁷⁴⁴ Blessings “are like channels of God’s transforming grace” where believers “seek communion with Christ, His grace flows to us, and we are changed.”⁷⁴⁵ With the brokenness that afflicts many people today, “our world is hungry for genuinely changed people.”⁷⁴⁶ When a minister takes care of his- or herself, they can better care for others. Many ministers get so wrapped up in running their ministry that they forget to care for themselves and their families. It is vital to the longevity of the minister to create a discipline of resting, taking a Sabbath, and engaging in periodical Sabbaticals.

Ruth Barton reminds us that Jesus sent his disciple out to minister, and they returned full of stories of their successes. Jesus “was more interested in helping them not to become overly enamored by ministry successes or inordinately driven by their compulsions” because he instructed them to enter into a time of solitude and prayer.⁷⁴⁷ Almost every time Jesus spends time ministering, he withdraws to pray either before or after his interactions with his followers. Jesus was observing micro-Sabbaths. A time of

737. Paul W Brand and Philip Yancey, “And God Created Pain: A World-Famous Surgeon’s Appreciation for the Gift Nobody Wants,” *Christianity Today* 38, no. 1 (January 10, 1994): 4.

738. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 134.

739. Aker, “Charismata,” 18.

740. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 138.

741. Lawrence O Richards, *A Practical Theology of Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 222.

742. Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, 137.

743. Scot McKnight, “Jesus Creed,” *Christian Century* 121, no. 18 (September 7, 2004): 22.

744. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 7.

745. Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines*, 19.

746. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 11.

747. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 120.

solitude and prayer. Barton declares that “Sabbath-keeping is the lynchpin of a life lived in sync with the rhythms that God himself built into our world.”⁷⁴⁸ Spending quality time with God is the space where we acknowledge our human limits and recognize God’s infiniteness.

Good leadership will include space for Sabbaths. It is in this space that leaders can ask difficult questions about the life and health of their organization; questions like: “Do I remain a part of this community where the way of life is killing me or do I leave in order to survive as a human being? What defense structures do I need to put in place to defend against the influence of this community rather than being able to lean into it and learn from it?”⁷⁴⁹ God will provide answers and direction if leaders are willing to spend time alone with God.

Some leaderships incorporate spiritual retreats into their organizations several times per year. These retreats can last from two to seven days and take place in remote places. Barton describes this time as a “time apart when we move more slowly, take time to rest, have extended time for solitude and silent listening, share our journeys and key learnings, eat together and enjoy one another’s company.”⁷⁵⁰ During these retreats, “time, food, conversations, sorrow, hope, and companionship take on a rare, sweet, and compelling cast” and invites the Spirit, which “usually comes in unexpected, utterly surprising moments where the gift of goodness opens our heart to wonder and gratitude.”⁷⁵¹ Resting in the presence of God is full of joy, peace, and refreshing.

In his book *Sabbath*, Dan Allender reminds Christians that this sacred time with God is the fourth commandment and is “the bridge that takes us from the first three, which focus on God, to the final five, which concentrate on our relationships with others” and is “a day of delight for humankind, animals, and the earth” that is a reminder of Eden.⁷⁵² The Sabbath is a twenty-four-hour period celebrated with God in the cool of the day, with a “feast of remembrance and anticipation” designed to re-create the garden and recreate in the new heavens and earth.⁷⁵³ Many people say that it is difficult to celebrate the Sabbath on Sunday because of their ministry responsibilities, but the day and the time are unimportant. What is important is that time is set aside to engage in Sabbath rest. Allender is adamant on the importance of the Sabbath and says that “it is as wrong to violate the Sabbath as it is to steal, lie, and kill.”⁷⁵⁴ That is an eye-opening statement that ought to make all Christians pause and reflect on how they treat the Sabbath.

Pride tends to prevent people from observing the Sabbath because people “prize power and presume that [time] is our possession to be used as one wishes.”⁷⁵⁵ Without rest, the life of a leader will be out of balance and can lose its stability. What is the benefit of engaging in a Sabbath? Delight; the delight that would “counter grief” and an

748. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 122.

749. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 128.

750. Barton and Ford, *Strengthening the Soul*, 181.

751. Allender, *Sabbath*, 3.

752. Allender, *Sabbath*, 5.

753. Allender, *Sabbath*, 14.

754. Allender, *Sabbath*, 6.

755. Allender, *Sabbath*, 20.

opening of “our hearts to what seems beyond our wildest dreams.”⁷⁵⁶ In the midst of these dreams is awe. Awe at the beauty that surrounds us, the awe that is God. Allender says that “awe is humbling,” and without humility, there “is a mark of decadence and narcissism.”⁷⁵⁷ It will require a great deal of effort to plan and prepare the atmosphere around a person to engage in this kind of awe and humility, which leads to delight and “requires the courage to be attentive, intentional, and diligent.”⁷⁵⁸ Engaging in the activities that lead to delight causes a sense of joy, which is different from happiness.

Allender says that the Sabbath is a day of play, and “play is not a diversion if it is truly risky; instead, [play] is the highest calling to plunge into the unknown and to commit to a course of action that may bring more suffering than remaining ensconced on the couch.”⁷⁵⁹ There is a sense of safety in order, and many people prefer to be safe than taking risks. Instead, people invest their time into their work and have the ability to control and achieve their dreams, as opposed to risk the dreams and allow God to control their path.⁷⁶⁰ Risks can lead to worry (fear of emptiness) and then to suffering.

Creating a place for and observing the Sabbath rest allows for space to understand the changing landscape. The only thing constant in this world is change. In order to keep up, ministers must allow time to catch up on their rest and their relationship with God. It is possible to work for God and not work with God. Christians should slow down and spend time with God to be confident that they are working with him. Working under one’s strength will not yield the same results that could have been seen if a person had relied on God’s strength. Taking time to have a good night’s rest ensures that one has the physical strength to keep going. Observing the Sabbath ensures that one has the spiritual strength to press on. Taking a Sabbatical is like pushing a reset button that prolongs the lifespan of a minister.

756. Allender, *Sabbath*, 25.

757. Allender, *Sabbath*, 45.

758. Allender, *Sabbath*, 47.

759. Allender, *Sabbath*, 87.

760. Allender, *Sabbath*, 134.